

SOVIET LITERATURE

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transition from Socialism to Communism. Competition between Socialism and Capitalism, whose aggressive and reactionary circles are prepared to interfere forcibly with the growth of the forces of Socialism and the peoples' desire for liberation from the yoke of capitalism and colonial oppression, is spreading over a wider international arena and is passing to a new and higher stage. In these circumstances there is an unmeasurable increase in the importance of Soviet literature as a transformer of society and as an active educative force.

Literature, like all other branches of art, has the task of inspiring the Soviet people to creative work, to the overcoming of all the difficulties and obstacles on their path and to the great achievement of building Communism.

The Soviet people expects that its writers create arresting and truthful images of our glorious contemporaries who are performing colossal tasks for the continued expansion of heavy industry which is the basis of further development of the country's whole economy and a guarantee of the impregnability of the frontiers of our Motherland—our contemporaries who erect gigantic power stations, perfect the methods of building construction, cultivate millions of hectares of virgin land, struggle for the greater development of agriculture and the fuller satisfaction of the growing demands of the working people for consumer goods.

The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. calls upon writers to make a deep study of reality on the basis of creative understanding of Marxism-Leninism which allows one to see the essential truth of life in its complexity and fulness as it is affected today by the international conditions of increasing struggle between the camp of imperialism and the camp of Socialism and democracy; it calls upon them to understand the processes of development that go on in our country, processes directed by the Communist Party; to understand the principles and perspectives of the growth of our society, to bring to light life's contradictions and conflicts. The Soviet people want to see the writers as passionate fighters who influence life, who help the people to build a new society in which all the sources of public riches will flow as a full stream and in which will grow the new man whose mentality will be free from the survivals of capitalism. Our writers are called upon to inculcate in the Soviet people Communist ideas and Communist morality, to help the rounded, harmonious development of personality and the full blooming of all the creative talents and abilities of the working people. The duty of Soviet writers is to create an art that is truthful, an art of great thoughts and feelings which reveal the full depths of the rich spiritual world of the Soviet people, to express in the images of their heroes the whole wide scope of their working activity and their closely united public and personal life. Our literature is called upon not only to portray the new but also to contribute to the victory of the new in every way.

An important and honourable task of literature is the education of youth—workers in factories, kolkhoz members, intellectuals, the men of the Soviet Army—in the spirit of love for work, alertness, courage, confidence in the victory of our cause, in the spirit of unstinting, unreserved devotion to their Socialist Motherland and in the spirit of constant readiness to repulse imperialist aggressors if they make any attempt to interrupt the peaceful labours of our people.

In a period in which aggressive imperialistic circles muster and restore the forces of defeated German fascism, Soviet literature cannot stand aside in the struggle against reactionary forces of the old world. Soviet literature is called upon to foster and strengthen with full revolutionary passion the patriotic feelings of the Soviet people, to strengthen the friendship between peoples, to help towards an even closer unity in the mighty camp of peace, democracy and Socialism, to foster the feelings of proletarian internationalism and the brotherly solidarity of working people. It is the duty of Soviet writers to raise even higher the banner of struggle for unity among all the

peace-loving forces in the interests of the safety of the people, to unmask and brand the criminal plans of the imperialists who threaten to unleash a new world war.

Continuing the best traditions of Russian and world classical literature, Soviet writers creatively develop the method of Socialist realism founded by the great proletarian writer Maxim Gorky; and they follow the traditions of the militant poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky. Socialist realism demands of writers a faithful, historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. To be equal to the onerous tasks of Socialist realism means to possess a deep knowledge of the real life, thoughts and feelings of the people; to show sympathy and understanding of their emotions, and to be able to express these qualities in an arresting and appealing artistic form worthy of the best examples of realistic literature—and to present all that with the necessary understanding of the great struggle of the working class and all the Soviet people for the strengthening of our present Socialist society and for the triumph of Communism. In today's circumstances the Socialist-realist method demands that the writer understand the tasks of completing the building of Socialism and a gradual transition from Socialism to Communism in our country. Socialist realism provides a wide scope for creative initiative, a wide choice of forms and styles that suit the individual leanings and tastes of a writer.

Any failure to observe the principles of Socialist realism harms the development of Soviet literature. Our literature in many ways still lags behind the thrustful, flourishing life of the country and fails to meet the demands of readers who have grown to a new political and cultural stature. Some writers do not show themselves as exacting enough in their work; they produce mediocre, feeble work that is a poor reflection of Soviet reality. Recently there has been a lack of arresting, expressive images which could serve as inspiring examples to millions of readers. So far there are no monumental works about the heroism of the Russian proletariat and the Party of Lenin during the years of the first Russian Revolution and the Great October Socialist Revolution; nor are there enough books about our Soviet Army, the faithful guardian of the peaceful labours of the Soviet people. Up to now literary criticism and research whose duty is to work in the rich field of our classical heritage, to generalize the experience of Soviet literature and to help that literature to grow in idea-content and in artistry, lag far behind.

The tendency apparent in several works to embellish reality, and to gloss over the "growing pains" and contradictions of development exerted a harmful influence on the progress of our literature. The fight against the survivals of capitalism in the minds of individuals does not find its due reflection in literature. On the other hand, some writers, isolated from life, searched for artificial conflicts, produced hack work, gave distorted and at times defamatory descriptions of Soviet society and passed sweeping insults on the Soviet people.

Soviet writers should give active support to everything new and progressive, everything that helps our Society to move forward; they should scourge with full strength and passion the psychological survivals of the old world of private-ownership, should show no mercy to the apathetic and the hidebound. They should help to eradicate from our life all the anti-social and outworn things which interfere with the speedy growth of the Socialist economy and culture.

The Party calls upon writers to strive for creative daring, for the enrichment and development of all categories of literature, for raising the level of artistry so as to satisfy in full measure the ever-growing spiritual demands of the Soviet reader.

Soviet writers enjoy highly favourable work conditions. Their readers—alert, mature, friendly but exacting readers who love the literature of their country—number millions. That is a situation about which the best writers of the past could only dream.

To foreign writers, Soviet literature is a source of inspiration and of experience in the struggle for a new, progressive writing; at the same time it enriches itself by using in its development and improvement the best works of foreign progressive authors. In their fight for a high degree of mastership, our writers can and should use in a greater degree the valuable experience of our foreign friends.

In the carrying out of the honourable and responsible tasks which confront Soviet literature, great importance attaches to the Union of Writers which, during the past twenty years, has become a mighty social organization, an organization built on the principles of collective leadership and uniting all the creative forces of writers, Party and non-Party.

Soviet literature and Soviet writers have grown ideologically and have been tempered in the fight against various foreign influences and against manifestations of bourgeois ideology and the survivals of capitalism. The Union of Soviet Writers should continue to pay chief attention to the idea-content of Soviet literature, to the ideological training of writers and to the improving of their craftsmanship. It should fight vigorously against divergences from the principles of Socialist realism, against attempts to lead our literature away from the life of the Soviet people and from the urgent questions of policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet State; it should fight against the resurgence of nationalism, cosmopolitanism and other manifestations of bourgeois ideology, against attempts to push literature into the morass of narrow-mindedness, emptiness and decadence. Soviet literature is called upon to serve the cause of the working masses as the most progressive literature in the world and to be on the highest level of the world's artistic creativity.

The constant concern of the Union should be to ensure that our writers ~~live the~~ life of the people and share in the interests and aspirations of the people, that our writers take an active part in creating a Communist society, that they see and know the people of today, the real heroes, the builders of Communism.

One of the most important tasks of the Union of Soviet Writers is to give constant help to beginners in their work and to enrich Soviet literature with new talent.

An earnest of new achievements in Soviet literature would be a greater ideological unity of all creative literary forces, a courageous blossoming of high-principled criticism and self-criticism among writers and comradely discussions of problems of creation.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party wishes the Second Congress of Soviet Writers success in its labours and expresses the firm confidence that our writers will give all their strength in self-abnegating service to the Soviet people and will create works worthy of the great epoch of the building of Communism.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THE SOVIET UNION

Margarita Alligher

FIRST POEM

The southern town was gripped with icy cold
The sea turned grey, the grey of lifeless lead.
To us in school the bitter words were told:
 Lenin is dead.

Silent we stood, the youngest of the scholars,
 The eight-year-olds whom he had called his own;
We felt those shrewd, kind eyes were fixed upon us,
 But shrewder, kinder than we'd ever known.
Those eyes looked down on us from leaf-framed portrait
 Looked up at us from cover of a book;
And those he'd called his grandsons and granddaughters
 Saw life, not death, asserted in that look.

Then, in the streets as we were walking homeward,
 We felt that he was walking by our side,
And seeing what we saw with all its contrasts
 Of poverty and pride
That marked those days of makeshift and transition—
 The meagre shops that sold our meagre bread,
The carriages, the furs, the silks and satins,
 The children poorly clad and poorly fed,
The lively, bustling streets, the lines of workless,
 The empty laughter and the honest tears,
The clashing and unsettled patchwork pattern
 Of those grim years.

How hard it must have been for him to leave us
 Ere he would see fulfilled the plans he'd made
For us, his cherished "Young Octobrists"
 That we might face the future unafraid.
Perhaps it was for this that people passing
 Paused in their stride to look at us again;
They understood that we, those grave-faced children,
 Had borne a special loss, a special pain.
And those whose eyes revealed their understanding
 Were those whose clothes revealed their life of toil—
The railwaymen, the masons and the dockers,
 The fishermen, the tillers of the soil.
That fateful day had brought us close together
 We saw in them new friends, and something more,—
In each of them we saw a trace of Lenin:
 With one it was the crumpled cap he wore;
Another had the famous, clear-cut profile;

Another had the shrewd, far-seeing gaze;
But all reflected Lenin's love for children
As if they'd pledged to guard our future days.

At home that evening, dazed and mute with sorrow
Which tears and spoken word could not express,
I wrote my first few lines of halting poetry,
And found in them relief from my distress.
They started with a youthful, hopeful cry:
"He did not die!"

Next day, with poem tucked inside my satchel,
I hurried off to school, and fast I ran
Through those same streets, but now with strange, new feelings.
Arriving well before the class began;
And blushing, hesitant, I gave my teacher
The little sheet of paper I had brought.
She looked at me; her smile was kind but pensive,
A smile that seemed to hold some hidden thought.
Her eyes left mine; I followed their direction,
And knew my thoughts had not been mine alone—
I saw that strewn upon the desk before her
Were many sheets exactly like my own;
And each began with youthful, hopeful cry:
"He did not die!"

Then, while a snowstorm beat upon the windows,
We took our turns to read what we had penned.
Those childish lines were something more than poetry
What great and glorious things did they portend!
They pledged the faith of that young generation
The faith that sees a wond'rous future dawn,
The faith that in the minds and lives of millions
Lenin lives on.

Since then the storms and snows of many winters
Have come and gone; the years have run their course;
And still it seems our earliest thoughts and feelings
Are those that keep their sharpness and their force.
When we look back we ask, what is the reckoning?
What have we done of good, and what of ill?
Have we kept faith and truly served our country?
What of the pledge we promised to fulfil?
Perhaps 'tis not for us to give the answer
And not for us the final yea or nay;
But still to me that clear-eyed childhood vision
Remains the clearest answer for today
And for the days ahead of work and leisure,
The days of grief, the days when hearts are high;
Those childhood words we have the right to echo:
"He did not die!"

Translated by A.R.J.

BORIS
GORBATOV

THE PARTING

1

THE last pit ponies of the Steep Maria colliery were soon to be brought to the surface. There were seven of them, all from the Far West workings—Marusya, Swallow, Marquis, Rascal, Miss, Merchant and the old grey mare Seagull. They were all together for the last time in their underground stable, and the drivers were getting them ready for their trip, plying body-brushes and curry-combs as if their charges were being prepared not for humdrum work on the surface but for drawing the carriages at a wedding.

One of the older drivers, Nikifor Bubnov, nicknamed "the Bachelor" had a wistful expression on his pock-marked face while he was pleating a bright red silk ribbon into Seagull's grey mane. "Well, old girl," he murmured, "you've come to the end of your work in the pit. That's how it is. You're going up there where the sun shines and the grass is green and space and air everywhere." He spoke in a low, sing-song voice as if he were telling a fairy-story to a child. "Ay, Seagull, I don't suppose you even remember what daylight is. No, of course, you don't. How could you?" Dragging some wisps of mane over the mare's forehead so that he could tie them with a bow of ribbon, he went on caressingly: "Yes, Seagull, lass. That's how it is; that's how it is."

Nikifor's mates as they groomed their charges were singing softly one of the old songs of the pit pony drivers:

*The hooter sounds, the cage comes down,
The tubs begin to roll,
Another driver breaks a leg
And that's the price of coal.*

Old Prokop Lesniak, overseer of the Far West workings, entered the stable unnoticed. Pausing just inside the doorway with his lamp raised, he took in all the details with his usual keen scrutiny. The stable, which used to house about fifty ponies, now seemed almost deserted. Its warm, homely atmosphere had gone. Soon the remaining ponies would be taken away, the dirt and straw cleaned up, the stalls dismantled and everything changed. It would be a stable no longer but a depot for electric locomotives. Only the smell, the smell of old pit stables, would linger—a mixture of decaying hay, sweating horses, manure, rats and harness leather. Smells die hard.

This excerpt is from the second incompleated volume of *Donbas*, on which Boris Gorbatoov was working at the time of his death in January, 1954. A translation of the first volume was published in *Soviet Literature* No. 8, 1952.

The drivers were singing,

*And so good-bye you shining rails,
Good-bye you darkened air,
Good-bye you blue-eyed lamp-room girl,
Good-bye my old bay mare.*

The song was old and sad, but the drivers sang it without any sadness in their voices, even, it seemed to Lesniak, with a touch of irony. The song suited neither the occasion nor the mood. The drivers sang it simply because there was no other suitable song. They had found the ribbons for the occasion, but no song for it, he told himself sadly.

"That's the idea, lads," he said by way of greeting as he came up to the drivers. "Those ribbons—that shows the right spirit."

"And what else could we do?" asked Vasya Pletnyov, a cheerful, curly-headed youth who was grooming Swallow. "No ordinary animals we've got here. They deserve medals, everyone of them. Pensions, too, for that matter." He finished with a burst of laughter and Swallow at once broke into a loud cheerful whinny. "Listen to that! Listen to that!" he exclaimed. "Swallow understands everything, doesn't he?"

Lesniak turned to Nikifor and asked him: "Well, what have you decided to do?"

"What I've always done," Nikifor muttered.

"Still want to work with horses?"

"What else?"

"What else? How can you speak like that?" demanded Lesniak. "Do you think there is no work in the whole colliery apart from that old Seagull of yours? If you have no brains of your own, borrow some from the lads around you." Raising his voice he went on: "Hey, boys! Do you want a change of work?"

"You bet we do," chipped in Vasya ahead of the others. "We're switching over from the wooden plough to the tractor."

"You see?" commented Lesniak. "And these mates of yours are horsemen like yourself, Nikifor."

"Horsemen? Bah!" retorted Nikifor, but without much heat. Then he sighed and added as if apologizing: "Seagull will miss me. There's that to think of too."

Lesniak cast an angry glance at the old grey mare and growled: "She hasn't much time left for missing anything."

"Anyhow, I'll see her to the grave."

Seagull stood with her head hung low, pathetically indifferent to the ribbons, the occasion, everything. There was something inexpressibly sad and bitter about the submissive attitude of this old, worn-out pit pony with her scraggy, rat-bitten tail, her half-blind, rheumy eyes that had seen no daylight for many years, and her lips that kept moving as if she were chewing.

Lesniak laid his hand on Seagull's scrawny withers but the animal did not twitch a muscle. A few moments later, however, she raised her head, turned her sad, wise old eyes on Lesniak, gave a half-sigh, half-yawn, and let her head sag down again.

"Uh-huh," murmured Lesniak. "A horse's life is a short one. And what a horse that Seagull was in her day. A real she-devil. No wonder they called her Satana then."

"So you remember that?" asked Nikifor eagerly.

"You bet I remember," laughed Lesniak. And indeed he well remembered Seagull's she-devil youth just as he remembered all the Steep Maria horses—the seven still in the stables, those that went before them and even those that were there when he was working as a brake-boy forty-five years ago. Especially well he remembered a young stallion, his first charge when he was promoted driver, whom he had named Neighbour, because both of them came from the same region of Orel.

The two had not been working long in partnership before they were involved in a terrible accident. A train of tubs broke loose on a steep incline and Neighbour was crushed and badly injured. But, like a true mine-worker, he bore his injuries uncomplainingly, only a trickle of tears from his almost human eyes telling of the agony he suffered. Prokop could do nothing for his stout-hearted friend: he himself was lying gravely injured among the wreckage in that lonely roadway.

A shot put an end to Neighbour's suffering, and Prokop was "sent to hospital to die," as the drivers' song runs. But he recovered and again went back to Steep Maria. There was nowhere else for him to go. And he returned to driving, and sat again, not on the second tub of the train as demanded by the regulations, but on the leading tub, as demanded by the hazardous code of the drivers. When he came to that same rise in the track he whistled in encouragement to his new horse, hoping that his signal would have the same cheerful note as before, but somehow it sounded mournful.

The horse answered the whistle with an unfamiliar, spiritless whinny and refused to rush the hill. Prokop rained angry blows on the horse with his knout—a thing he had never done to Neighbour, who seemed to understand his every word. And, recalling his old friend, the fifteen-year-old lad broke into tears, tears that brought some ease to him in that lonely place. Later he became accustomed to his new horse, whom he called Lazybones.

Lazybones was replaced by Rowdy, Rowdy by Sparrow and Sparrow by Bobtail; and many were the ponies he drove along the pit roads, before the youth Prokop became the coal-winner Lesniak. And it seemed now to the old overseer Lesniak that his youth was galloping past him—six or seven horses, that was his youth. Meantime the lads were singing:

*Oh, Vanya, Vanya lying there,
Why did you drive so rash?
In debt to the office once again,
And wanting to earn more cash?*

As always, the song started a train of thoughts in Lesniak's mind. Perhaps the lads were not so far wrong in singing that old song as a farewell. No, it wasn't custom that demanded a devil-may-care spirit in the drivers of pit ponies; it was harsh necessity. It was harsh necessity that gave birth to custom. For the sake of an extra kopeck they spared neither their horses nor themselves. The horses were beaten mercilessly and the drivers did not slack off even on the steepest parts, but risked their lives by trusting only to the hand-brake of the leading tub.

In those days the pit roads were narrow, low-ceilinged and badly propped; the rails were poorly maintained and slippery; the loops where two trains could pass were few; there was deep mud between the

rails. So mishaps occurred every day—a derailed tub fouling a whole train, a loose tub racing down an incline and leaving a trail of damage, or tubs cannoning into one another and scattering their loads. The drivers would curse the owners, God and the world in general; the horses would fall dying between the rails; fatally injured men would gasp in agony.

What terrible days those were, thought Lesniak, and no more terrible trade than that of the pit-train drivers. The drivers of today know about those times only from the stories of their elders.

And now, his thoughts ran on, the last of the horses were leaving the pit. For the last time horses' hoofs would sound under the arched roofs of the pit roads. For the last time would be heard the piercing whistle of the drivers. Now, in 1940, the former stables of Steep Maria would become a depot for electric locomotives. Yes, these stables would make a fine depot!

2

The ponies were leaving the mine—leaving it for ever. And something intangible and unseen but alive and horrible was leaving the mine with them, never to return.

"Wonderful!" said Lesniak, ruffling the hair on Seagull's bony back. "Wonderful how you managed to keep that Seagull of yours going, Nikifor."

The embarrassed Nikifor did not answer.

"I suppose," Lesniak went on, "it must be at least ten years that she has been working underground?"

"Ten years exactly."

"There you are! It's simply wonderful." The old overseer looked intently at the driver. There came back to his mind a story that had once been the talk of the whole colliery, a story whose three main characters were Seagull (or Satana as she then was), the driver Savka Kugut and Nikifor "the Bachelor."

Nikifor got his nickname the first day he appeared at Steep Maria about fifteen years before. "Who are you?" barked the foreman Siromakha when he noticed among a crowd of new workers the timid figure of Nikifor in the sun-bleached homespun jacket and bark shoes of a peasant. Nikifor, almost dumb with embarrassment, stuttered: "You mean me? Who... who am I? They call me 'Bachelor.'"

That was how he was known in his village and that was all that would come to his tongue. From that time on the name "Bachelor" stuck.

Nikifor was indeed a bachelor in the special sense in which the word is used in village life—not just an unmarried man, but a poor, ill-favoured man who had little chance of ever finding a bride. And no one in the whole Bryansk region better deserved the title. He never had any possessions, or family or house that he could call his own. During all his youth he worked for others; then, after doing his army service, he became a farm-hand. Always he worked with horses, and always the horses of others. He had no greater wish than to have a horse of his own. If he had a horse, he dreamed, he would have a house, a household, a young wife and children. For, who would marry a horseless peasant? And it was to earn money to buy himself a horse that he went to Steep Maria. He went on the advice of a fellow-villager who had some experience of life.

At Steep Maria, however, the "Bachelor" was given the work not of

coal-winning but of a poorly-paid stable-hand. Nikifor was a quiet, timid, obedient young man and he made no protest. It seemed to be his fate to look after the horses of others all his life. Still, during the winter, he managed to buy a good jacket and new boots for himself, but he disliked the colliery and could not get used to working underground. When spring came, he left Steep Maria without saying a word to anyone, but he returned in the autumn crestfallen and even more starved-looking. His dream of having a horse of his own never left him.

And so with the coming of the first warm winds he would leave the colliery and with the first snows he would return.

The "Bachelor" became a familiar figure at Steep Maria, and was loved for his quiet, gentle nature and more than anything else for the fact that he was a lonely, luckless bachelor. Every autumn, when he returned to Steep Maria sunburned but thin, restless and smelling of the wind, the trees and horse sweat, the miners would chaff him: "Well, 'Bachelor,' have you got married this time?" Nikifor learned to chaff back: "Oh no! Couldn't find anyone worthy of me. All of them pock-marked." And when he was gone they would shake their heads and say, "Ay! Poor Bachelor."

Thus did Nikifor Bubnov pass his life between village and colliery—until Seagull appeared on the scene.

Seagull was brought to the Steep Maria colliery in 1930. She was a lively three-year-old, so lively that when she arrived at the pit shaft door everybody smiled. She made no fuss about entering the cage, and, once inside, she neighed merrily. "Poor thing. Saying good-bye to the daylight," said the lift girl as she fixed the kicking-boards round her passenger. But Seagull had no idea that she was parting with the daylight for a long time, maybe for ever. She neighed light-heartedly, because she was only three years old, because she was happy and wanted to run and cavort about with her tail up. She had no premonition of evil.

The darkness of the mine at first surprised her but did not scare her. She knew what night was and she patiently waited for morning. But the night was endless, morning never came, and Seagull, or whatever her name was then, became disturbed and restless. She looked with wild, crazy eyes at the people who kept her in this dark cave. She could not understand why they did it. Stretching out her long, crane-like neck she neighed incessantly; or rather she howled, and it was impossible to listen unmoved to this plea for freedom and sunshine. . . .

When they attempted to harness Seagull she went completely mad, as if realizing that if she surrendered now she would have to remain in the darkness for ever. She lashed out frenziedly, kicking and biting at all who approached her. Her hind hoof caught one driver on the chest, killing him instantly; another driver was badly injured.

"A she-devil, a real she-devil," cursed the drivers, and one after another they gave up the attempt to harness her. It was then that Savka Kugut tried his hand. Savka swore that either he would break in Satana or beat her to death. "You may be Satana," he boasted, "but I'm the Anti-Christ himself."

Savka Kugut was a notorious character in Steep Maria. No one knew for certain what he was or where he came from. Some said he was a Gypsy, others said he was a Cossack, still others said he was the son of a horse-thief who had been sent to Siberia—for many men who escaped from

Siberia in tsarist times found work in the mines of the Donets Basin, where no one was ever asked to show his papers.

Kugut volunteered no information about himself. He was a handsome man with a dark moustache and heavy eyebrows, strongly built and rather a dandy, but a dandy of the gutter. He wore with careless pride a variety of gaudy, motley rags, mostly presents from women, and he wore them as if they were silks and velvets. But he set no store on his finery and he would sell his bright rags for drink or would give them away. Indeed, he set no store on anything in the world.

He was a great lady-killer. He accepted the favours of the colliery girls scornfully but loved no one in return, and when he was drunk he often beat them as coldly, silently and mercilessly as he beat horses. He was open-handed only with his cronies and for them he would part with his last kopeck, not from friendship but as a boastful gesture. He bragged of his strength, his devil-may-care spirit, his defiance of the bosses; and especially he bragged that he was the last of the real horse-drivers in the colliery—not like this new generation of intellectuals, as he called them.

Kugut was never without his knout with its short stock and long lash—a dandy's knout decorated with knife-cuts and a fancy leather tassel dangling from its butt like an ornament on an officer's scabbard. It was this knout that was going to tame Satana.

He set about this taming business with a flourish. He arrived at the stables in the middle of a shift when most of the ponies were out on the roads. He put a halter on the mare, and spitting on his hands, took his knout and, without a word, brought the lash down on her back. Satana neighed, at first in surprise and then in anger. She backed and reared, but Kugut held the halter with an iron hand, and, without a pause, brought the lash down again.



Thus the taming of Satana began. Kugut worked in silence: he would lash her, then pull the halter-rope and, standing in front of her, glare at her with his terrifying dark eyes. Then he would resume the merciless, silent beating and glare at her again so that the trembling animal would remember for ever the eyes and the knout of her master.

Nikifor in his corner of the half-dark stable looked on unmoved at the fight between man and beast. Their long ugly shadows ran along the walls

and broke on the floor. At times the shadows merged and it seemed as if a gigantic rider were galloping on a crazy horse and lashing it madly, but without being able to move away from this underground stable. Seagull's cries did not affect Nikifor. Since his childhood he had been used to seeing animals being beaten mercilessly by muzhiks who had no other way than this of venting their wrath against the miseries of life. Nikifor himself in his anger had beaten animals without afterwards feeling either shame or regret. He would beat them, and then feed them, and that was that.

Did he love horses? He couldn't say. He never thought about it. The horses were someone else's horses. So he watched poor Kugut's labours and was worried only that the other horses in the stables, excited by Satana's cries, might start making trouble. When Kugut led Satana out of the stable to break her in to haulage work, Nikifor dismissed the whole matter from his mind.

About two hours later Kugut brought Satana back. Nikifor saw from the first glance that there was no peace between them. Kugut had not won: Satana had not surrendered. Both were tired, but furious. Satana was steaming and her back was slashed with bleeding cuts.

"You certainly let her have it," said Nikifor as Kugut handed him the halter, and there was no telling whether his words indicated surprise or reproach.

"I'll kill her yet," muttered Kugut. He brushed a damp lock of hair off his forehead, spat angrily and left the stable.

Nikifor led Satana to her stall. "It's your fault too, lass," he began good-humouredly, but immediately cut his words short. It seemed that there was a spark of deep hatred in the sideways glance that Satana gave him. It puzzled him. "But what have I to do with it?" he muttered as if justifying himself. "I wasn't the one that lashed you. Eh! What's the use speaking to you?" And he went away, feeling offended.

At the appointed time he gave her her oats. To his surprise, Satana eagerly plunged her nose in the manger and started eating greedily. She munched her feed hurriedly, almost frantically, unlike most horses, who chewed slowly and as if lost in thought. Nikifor thought that Satana was eating like that so as to get strength for the renewed battle with Kugut the next day. This thought both surprised and scared Nikifor.

"A she-devil, all right," he muttered in wonderment. "Well, well. We'll see."

Next morning it began all over again. Again Kugut came with his knout; again he lashed the still-unbroken horse; again he took her away. But this time Nikifor was ill-at-ease when he watched them go, and all day he remained so. He could not dismiss that she-devil from his mind.

At midday Kugut brought Satana back to the stable. She was in a terrible state. Rags of torn skin were hanging from her back, her flanks and her legs. She was panting hard. She gave no neigh as she entered the stable, but made only a choking noise. In her eyes—or so it seemed to Nikifor—the yellow fire of hate was burning undimmed.

"What a brute!" Kugut's voice sounded exhausted. He brushed the dirty sweat from his brow. "Never met a bastard like that in all my life." In a sudden fury he struck Satana on the nose with his clenched fist.

Even then Nikifor said not a word, but he hurried to lead Satana to her stall.

That night he did not leave the colliery; he remained near Satana. Later, the night stable-boy laughingly told his mates how Nikifor had spent the night talking to Satana—"a real heart-to-heart talk it was."

And that is exactly what it was. Like many shy, lonely people, Nikifor loved to talk to himself. He did it without knowing it.

"Why don't you want to work, lass?" he asked, carefully bathing the wounds on Satana's back. "That's no way to behave, you know. It's no good. We've all got to work, man or beast. You can't get away from work. No, it's no good, lass, no good at all."

Satana listened with her head hanging down.

"And, anyhow, what if it is underground?" he went on. "A pit's a pit. What do you expect? It has got to be underground. And of course you can work in a colliery too. . . . Look at me. I felt it the same way at first. But I got used to it. . . . We can work anywhere, lass. It's not so bad. Now, take this lump of sugar. . . . Come on, take it, now. Don't be afraid of me. I'm as timid as a mouse myself. I wouldn't hurt you. . . . That's better. There's a good girl." His look softened as the mare trustfully took the sugar from his grimy palm. "There, now. Everything's fine."

When next morning Kugut again came for Satana, Nikifor pleaded with him: "Now, Kugut . . . maybe that's enough, don't you think?"

"Enough what?"

"Well . . . you know . . . enough."

Kugut, without heeding Nikifor, went to Satana's stall. The mare shivered when she saw her tormenter approach. Nikifor hurried to get in front of Kugut. "Listen, Kugut. Leave her. Please leave her," he pleaded, pressing his hands to his chest and blinking his fair, almost colourless eyelashes. "What good will it do if you lash her to death? She's a living thing. . . ."

"Get out of my way," said Kugut in a tired voice.

"Please . . . have a heart. . . ."

"Get out!" suddenly barked Kugut, raising his knout.

Then something happened that kept the tongues wagging in Steep Maria for many a long day. Nikifor rushed out of the stables. His frenzied shouts brought a number of miners to the scene. Among them was Prokop Lesniak. Nikifor, waving his hands and unable to explain properly what was the matter, hurried them all into the stable.

Some of them, remembering Satana's victims among the drivers, took Kugut's side; one even said: "Call that a horse? It's a devil. It's not a knout she needs; it's a bayonet." But most of them took the animal's side.

"No, Kugut," said Lesniak. "That isn't the way a real miner would treat a horse. The horse is the miner's best friend."

"That's so," said another miner. "Beat a horse if you must, but think what you are doing, and have a heart."

"Look, he's lashed her almost to death. Hardly an inch of whole skin left on her. A shame, that's what it is."

"Pure sabotage," shouted a Comsomol lad heatedly.

Kugut kept silent, as if it were no concern of his. He did not try even to justify himself. He did not bark back. He simply stood there playing idly with his knout. But the word "sabotage" seemed to get under his skin. He smiled scornfully, slowly wound the lash round the stock of his knout and said: "That's enough! The party's over. I wash my hands of

that cursed mare. And as for you young intellectuals! . . . As he walked towards the door he added: "And as for that beast of yours, sell it to the Tatars for horse-meat. You'll never make a horse out of it." And he stalked off.

The argument raged hotly for a time and then the group dispersed. The last to go was the overseer Siromakha.

"That's a fine mess you've made, 'Bachelor,'" he said with a gesture of annoyance. "And who's going to straighten it out? If Kugut couldn't break her in, what are we going to do with her? . . . Ah, well, we'll think about that later."

So Nikifor found himself in charge of Satana. He became a nurse to her, bathed her wounds, fed her sugar and carrots and often stayed beside her through the night. Little by little, and imperceptibly to himself, he became devoted to this unhappy but proud animal. It was not the feeling of pity which he had felt before, but a new, strange feeling, almost of ownership. Now Satana was *his* horse; he had won her from Kugut, from Siromakha, from the drivers. Everyone else disowned her. If it had not been for him she would have been sold for horse-meat. And now she was his own, his by right, the horse he had always dreamed of. Well, perhaps not his very own, but at least it did not belong to anyone else as other horses did. . . .

"Eh, my lass," he would say while he was grooming her, "it would be fine if you and me could go to the country. That's the place for us. Country . . . wide fields . . . everything. And us ploughing the earth, and having things of our own. . . . Look at these carrots, now. They cost me money, plenty of money. But in the country we'd have our own. And oats of our own. . . . What d'you think of that, now?"

Often and often he returned to this dream of his.

"Just you wait, my lass, and have patience. I'll save my money and buy you out. You think I wouldn't? And you and me, we'll go to the country, to the wide fields, to the green grass."

He did not know how it could all be managed, did not know even if one could buy horses from the colliery; but he was sure that one day he would certainly do it. All he needed to do was to save his money. And this was the very horse he wanted.

At last Satana got well, quietened down and became good-tempered. Nikifor decided that it was time to try the harness on her. "I don't think it'll work," said Siromakha doubtfully, when Nikifor shyly put forward his proposal, but he did not forbid it. The news that Satana was to be given a new trial spread everywhere. Everyone wanted to see how the cursed she-devil would behave. But Kugut was not among those who came to watch.

To the general surprise, Satana allowed herself to be harnessed. Nikifor whispered something to her; she pricked her ears thoughtfully, and began pulling a train loaded with pit-props, to the accompaniment of merry shouts from the crowd.

That same day Savka Kugut, the "last of the real horse-drivers" of the colliery disappeared from Steep Maria, never to return. Where he went to no one knew, but he did not go to any of the neighbouring collieries. And at Steep Maria a new driver was born, Nikifor Bubnov and his horse had a different name, Seagull.

There had long existed an unwritten law at Steep Maria to the effect that drivers "christened" their horses themselves. Sometimes a name would be given during the animal's first trip, but more often it was given on the second or third day, by which time the driver had come to learn the character of his four-legged partner. And how apt some of the names were. Merchant was really a sleek, self-satisfied merchant, Marquis was a lazy malingering, and Miss was affected and coquettish.

Why Nikifor, a man from the wooded, far-inland country around Bryansk, called his charge Seagull, he could not say. But he liked the name and insisted that she should have it; and soon everyone in the colliery started calling the former she-devil by her new name. So in time the story of Satana became buried in the past. . . .

When spring came, its effects were hardly noticeable underground and Seagull remained quiet in the half dark stable. But Nikifor grew restless. The warm wind from the Sea of Azov called him home to the country. . . . But then, what about Seagull? . . . The spring freshets were running down the valleys, dry patches were appearing on the hillsides, the elders were becoming green in the hollows. . . . Nikifor wavered—and stayed on at Steep Maria.

The following spring the warm winds from the Sea of Azov did not bother him. Great changes had taken place in his life that year: he was now a married man. The "Bachelor's" bride was no female counterpart of himself, no middle-aged spinster or colourless widow, as one might have expected. She was a lively, good-looking girl, of a family that had been miners for generations. She herself worked in the colliery and was the "life and soul" of any group in which she worked. He met her in a public park one early autumn day—the first day he had ever gone out walking with his work-mates. Up to then he had lived a rather isolated life, as is usual with workers who do not think of their working place as their home. He had no close friends. He saved every rouble he could, and dreamed all the time of the day when he could "buy out" Seagull and take her away with him to his beloved Bryansk country, there to live the spacious life he loved. Indeed it could be said that at that time he lived not at Steep Maria but in some corner of the Bryansk country-side that his dream had created.

His work-mates knew this peculiarity of his.

"Well, 'Bachelor,'" they would chaff, "how are the savings coming along? Enough to buy the tail of the mare?"

Nikifor would never tell how much money he had—not from miserliness but from bewilderment. He was surprised and scared at the money he earned. He never had had so much money before. And it was all thanks to Seagull. She proved to be an exceptionally hard-working and tireless horse. Nikifor never carried, or even possessed, a knout because Seagull always put her whole heart into her work. It seemed that she always guessed what was expected of her. Nikifor needed only to say "Back!" and she would back through any restricted space without any fuss, picking her own way. Or when a tub had to be shunted a short distance, he would say "Hie!" and she would push the tub along the rails with her chest.

No load was too heavy for her, no journey too long. She worked with a fierce eagerness so long as she had her master beside her. She watched

his every movement with loving and understanding eyes that seemed more the eyes of a trustful, devoted dog than of a horse; and she missed him whenever he was out of her sight.

Nikifor, too, was a conscientious, hard worker. It is true, he was always thinking of that extra rouble, but life proved to be wiser than he was and had something more valuable in store for him.

In the old days a hard-working driver would hardly be noticed by the colliery bosses, except the foreman or the paymaster. The foreman would "get his pickings," if only an occasional drink, out of the higher earnings of the good worker, and the paymaster would simply keep the extra earnings for himself. Now the good worker could not remain in the shade for long; he was noticed and honoured as a "shock-worker." His name was mentioned in reports and speeches; his portrait appeared on the "board of honour"; he was mentioned in the local press.

All that comes about quite naturally in our country where a man distinguishes himself by good work. Nikifor gradually found himself dragged into the whirlpool of life at Steep Maria. Now many people had dealings with him. The Comsomol secretary brought two lads whom he wanted Nikifor to take as apprentices. Then the chairman of the colliery committee tried to get him to join in various trade-union activities, and he agreed to join the committee in charge of safety regulations in the pit. He was invited to take part in a Party discussion on pit haulage problems. Once he was visited by a correspondent of the district newspaper—obviously a far-seeing young man, for he brought with him lumps of sugar for Seagull. He questioned Nikifor at length on a number of matters which, it seemed to Nikifor, had little to do with immediate working problems—where Nikifor came from, why he was called "Bachelor," why he had never married, what were his aims and aspirations, and so on. Nikifor, however, did not reveal his innermost thoughts, but suddenly, and to his own surprise, in the middle of the interview he found he was asking himself: "But maybe I shouldn't think of going anywhere? Maybe I should settle down here?"

This new idea rather puzzled Nikifor. He put it out of his mind then, and in the evening after work he started thinking with a new intensity about life in the country, about buying Seagull and taking her with him to the village of Kletnya; about the house he would build and the piece of land he would plough. . . . But for some reason, this time there came to his mind not a picture of rich and easily worked land but stretches of marsh and of uncleared tree-stumps in the Bryansk district.

It was in this wavering period of his life that he first met Zina. She was with a number of other colliery girls in the park. She stood out from the others in his mind not only because of her looks but also because she was the first girl in the colliery at whom he had looked with more attention than he would give to a tree by the roadside. Up to that time he had looked at everyone and everything in the colliery indifferently—they meant nothing to him because he had no intention of settling down there. He ignored the colliery girls because they were too "sure of themselves." He wanted a girl who was quiet and shy as well as hard-working—in a word, a country girl.

Zina upset all his preconceived ideas. This grey-eyed, buxom colliery lass pushed her way into his consciousness and remained there, in command. Nikifor tried to arrange encounters with her. His courting was shy, unskil-

and not according to the book. He did not follow the young drivers' custom of chalking tender greetings on the tubs that would pass the girls; he did not stroll past her window playing an accordion; he did not invite her for a walk out into the steppe. Instead, he often called at Zina's home, drank tea or vodka with her old father and unhurriedly discussed colliery matters with him. Once or twice he went with her to the club and patiently looked on while she danced with the younger lads. He himself refused to dance.

Zina gladly accepted his offer of marriage.

"You see, girls," she explained to her friends, "it's a husband I want, not a dance partner. A young spark lives only one day, like a butterfly, but I have to live with my husband for the rest of my life."

No one in Steep Maria was very surprised when they married.

"The 'Bachelor' who broke in Satana won't have much trouble in handling a girl like Zina," the miners joked.

Married life upset all Nikifor's plans and dreams and made a hole in his savings, but that did not worry him. He knew now that he would not return to the country; Zina would not fit in with country life, and he himself had lost his urge for a bit of land of his own. He had got used to the colliery. Here he was respected; here he found his Zina and his destiny. What more could he want? It was only when he thought about Seagull that he was worried. It seemed that he had in some way played her false. "Well, Seagull, I've gone and got myself married. That's how it is," he confessed to her when he returned to the stable on the Monday morning following the wedding. But Seagull only neighed merrily in answer. She was glad that her master was back with her. And so everything was settled: the money Nikifor had saved for buying Seagull and returning to the country was spent on building a new house.

It was not until two years later, during a summer holiday, that he took his wife to Kletnya and showed her the forests of his childhood. He wanted to boast before his fellow-villagers; he wanted to show them his beautiful wife and let them all see that the "Bachelor" was no longer a bachelor, but a married man, a prosperous miner and an example to others.

Nikifor had neither house nor relatives in the village, so they stayed with a neighbour, the same neighbour who had advised him to work in the colliery to earn money enough to buy a horse. The neighbour was glad to welcome the guests, but he could not repress his curiosity, and over supper he said: "Well, Nikifor, you've brought your wife, and we approve of her. But what about the horse? You don't seem to have that horse yet."

"Ah, but you're wrong there," Nikifor answered calmly. "I have a horse too."

"A horse? Yours?"

"Yes, mine."

"Your own?"

"More than my own. It's all down in black and white as mine."

"What do you mean?" his host asked doubtfully. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Well, there it is. All written down in black and white. Comrade Stalin himself wrote it down that the horse was mine. And the name of the horse is Seagull."

His host rolled his eyes in bewilderment. After a pause he murmured: "Come on now, tell me all about it."

So Nikifor explained. It was Stalin's orders, he said, that each driver should always have the same horse and be responsible for its well-being, to an extent that would not be possible if they kept changing from one horse to another. So no other driver could touch his Seagull.

"Oh! So that's it!" burst out the host. "You certainly puzzled me. We have the same kind of thing here. We too live a new life," and he embarked on a long account of events in the village.

From his host's words Nikifor learned that there had been big changes there as well as in his own life. Everything in the life of his old friends was moving along a new road. The peasants' modest, long-cherished dreams of having their own bit of land, their own horse, good seeds in the spring and good crops in the autumn had now turned into one big, shared dream of a sound and prosperous collective economy.

Nikifor listened enchanted to this news. He was glad that he too had gone the same way and had not lagged behind. Everything on earth, he told himself, marched towards the same goal, Socialism. And it was with these thoughts in his head that he returned to Steep Maria after his holidays.

And on that September night of 1935 when Viktor Abrosimov and Andrei Voronko put up their famous coal-hewing records, it was Nikifor, as the best and most reliable driver of Steep Maria, who was chosen with his Seagull to carry away the coal from the pit-face. The name of Nikifor Bubnov became known throughout the land, together with the names of the first Stakhanovites. And although he did not go to Moscow for the Stakhanovite rally he too was decorated for his work.

The government decree was read at a gathering before the night shift dispersed to their workings. Abrosimov and Voronko were awarded the Order of Lenin; the overseer Prokop Lesniak and the miner Mitya Zakorko were awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour and Nikifor Bubnov was awarded the Badge of Honour.

The heroes were called to the platform, where Lesniak, Abrosimov and Voronko delivered short speeches. Nikifor kept silent and did no more than bow to all sides as if he were attending one of the old village community assemblies. He looked confused and guilty.

"Well, Comrade Bubnov, congratulations," said Vasili Zhuravlyov, the secretary of the town's Party committee. "Congratulations on your receiving this high award."

"I'll earn it! I'll earn it!" hurriedly protested Nikifor, for some reason pressing his pit lamp to his chest. "I promise you, I'll earn it."

Even to Seagull he told the story of the award in a hesitant way, as if he could not quite believe that he had received it. "You see, Seagull, that's how it is. We got this honour. . . ." He put his arms around the neck of his friend—and cried.

However, the honour brought no big changes in Nikifor's life; and, indeed, he wanted no changes. He was completely satisfied with his lot. He went on working as a driver although Voronko, as Party organizer, repeatedly suggested that he should take a study course and get promotion to a better job. Each time Nikifor would politely decline the offer. He was often told that he should have another horse, because it was not right that the best driver should have so old a horse as Seagull; but in this too he would not yield.

"No," he would answer, quietly but firmly, "I won't part with Seagull." And when they insisted he would add: "Please understand this—

it was her that made a real pit worker out of me."

At last they gave up the attempt, and he calmly went on as Seagull's driver until the time when all the pit ponies were to be brought to the surface.

4

"Well, shall we start?" shouted Vasya Pletnyov impatiently. He frowned at Lesniak and Nikifor who were lost in their memories of the old days and seemed to have forgotten that it was high time to take the ponies to the cage. Vasya could not restrain himself, for he had waited too long for this happy moment. Hadn't the time come for Comrade Pletnyov to part with horses for ever?

There was a time when the hazardous job of driving was the peak of Vasya's ambition. His father and grandfather had been drivers. Every youth who wanted to be a real miner had to climb the ladder—first, screener at the pit-head, then door-boy or lamp-room boy, then brake-boy. Then would come the job of driver and, only after that work at the coal-face. But even so it was the driver who represented the peak of the pit-boy's ambition, the devil-may-care driver who was always first in work, first in a fight, first in any wild escapade. Vasya, even before he could write, could give the ear-splitting whistle of the pony-drivers, scaring the girls and the old women with its sudden shrill blast.

But by the time he was eighteen years old and had fulfilled his ambition to become a driver, many things had changed in the colliery.

At first Vasya did not notice the change. He had a gay, roguish horse, Swallow, enjoyed working with him and was very proud of him, for no horse in the colliery was such a "character." But on the main routes of the colliery there appeared mighty electric locomotives, and they grew in number from day to day. Soon Vasya and his horse were pushed back by these monsters to the most remote by-ways of the mine.

Now the most honoured place was occupied not by the drivers and not even by the roofers, but by engineers, train-drivers, miners with pneumatic drills, electricians, mechanics and machine-minders. Among these men, armed with mechanized drills, hammers and perforators or with leather bags full of shiny tools, Vasya with his knout was like a troika-driver on an aerodrome. He became deeply aware of this and was no longer proud, but ashamed, that he worked with a horse and not a machine, that he smelt of horse sweat and manure and not of lubricating and fuel oil.

Those were the days of the fighting around Lake Khassan and the Khal-khiin Gol and on the Karelian isthmus. The tank-man was the ideal of the young people in the colliery districts, and the most popular song was "Three cheery tank-men, three cheery pals, the crew of a fighting machine." The boys sang this song with the same hero-worship and envy that the boys of the 'twenties sang "We Are the Red Cavalry." Vasya pleaded often with Prokop Lesniak to free him from the pony-driving and let him join the electric "cavalry," but the only answer he got was a sympathetic shake of the head and a plea for patience.

"Just you wait a bit, lad," Prokop would say. "Soon the end of horse transport will come. And where could I get another driver to take your place? You might say that you are the last driver in the whole colliery."

The distinction was small comfort to a lad of twenty. Only the hope of early freedom and, in the meantime, evening study on the driving of electric locomotives, prevented him from leaving Steep Maria. He had studied, he had waited impatiently; and now that the hour had come, he could not bear to be kept waiting a single moment more.

"But, please, Comrade Lesniak," pleaded Vasya, "what's holding us up? It's high time we started. Let's get moving." And seizing Swallow's halter, he started leading his horse away.

At this moment, however, a number of people came into the stable. The additional lamps that they carried gave the stable almost a holiday air. Vasya recognized the visitors. The old, heavily-built man supporting himself with a stick was the manager of the colliery, Gleb Dedok, known to all the miners as "Grandad"; he was in his famous quilted jacket, which he wore in winter when the mine was quite warm and in the summer when it was quite cool. The man with the cheerful, boyish eyes and a sparse beard was Pyotr Glushkov, an engineer from the headquarters of a group of Donbas collieries. A third, who looked more like a mechanic than an official because of his dungarees and the miner's lamp in his cap, was the Party organizer of Steep Maria, Sergei Pastushenko. With them was an old man from the local newspaper whom Vasya and everybody else in Steep Maria knew quite well. This old man at once rushed to the ponies' stalls.

"Just look at that!" he shouted in admiration when he noticed the red and blue ribbons in the manes and tails of the ponies. "They're all rigged out for a wedding procession!" Hurriedly pulling from an inside pocket his notebook, all dirty with coal dust, he started scribbling in it without looking. Long practice in the darkness of the coal-mines had taught him how to do this.

Vasya understood that these visitors had come specially for the leave-taking, and that pleased his pride.

"Hardly a wedding procession," smiled Lesniak, "but at least it is quite an occasion."

"And what an occasion!" declared Pastushenko, "a grand occasion!" He gave Swallow a cheerful pat on the back, scratched him behind the ears and made him neigh happily. "Aha! So you smell your freedom, eh?"

"He knows everything, that one. A real smarty," said Vasya.

"And you? I suppose you are more pleased than anyone else?"

"You bet I am," confessed Vasya with such eagerness that there was a burst of laughter. The only one who did not smile was "Grandad" who stood leaning heavily on his stick and looking around with a strangely gloomy expression. On his broad chest swung a lamp hooked to the top button of his jacket and its light fell on the ample bulge of his belly and his short-legged rubber boots of the type usually worn by old women.

"Now, Prokop," said Dedok loudly, "Do you remember the torch men?"

"Remember them well," came the quick answer.

"What kind of torch men?" asked Pastushenko.

"Ah! That was before your time."

"You see, Comrade Pastushenko," broke in Glushkov, "a torch man was . . . well, it wasn't even a trade; it's—how can I put it?—a feat of heroism."

"However, they paid good money for that heroism," said Dedok, "and people did it only for the money."

"Oh no! Not only for money," protested Prokop in a hurt tone. "You're quite wrong in that."

"But nobody would go to almost certain death for nothing."

"Wait a minute! What is this torch man business anyhow?" pleaded Pastushenko. "Tell us, please."

"I see I'll have to tell it," said the old newspaperman with a laugh.

"The more so because once I had a turn at it. What terrors I suffered!"

"So you were a torch man, Ivan Terentyevich?" asked Glushkov in surprise.

"Why not? I'm an old miner," declared the newspaperman, straightening his back with pride.

Vasya was surprised, not because the newspaperman had been a miner but because they addressed him as Ivan Terentyevich. Everybody in Steep Maria called him Taras Zanoza (Taras the Thorn), for that was how he signed his articles.

"Torch men—yes, the very name recalls the old days, doesn't it?" commented Taras. "Well, you see, it is like this. In those days there was no scientific way of fighting gas in the mines. And it cost a lot too. The mine-owners weren't willing to spend a lot of money on ventilation and things like that. But the muzhik was cheap—cheap as dirt, the starving muzhik from Orel or Kursk. Well . . . that's where the torch man comes in. After a shift had finished and everybody cleared from the mine, the torch man would go down alone to carry out his dreaded task."

"He would put on a long sheepskin coat with the fur side out and well soaked with water," said Dedok in a low voice, and it was apparent from his tone that he too once worked as a torch man.

"Yes, a sheepskin coat," continued Taras, "and carrying a torch on a long stick. You crawl along the workings, holding the torch well in front of you. It was horrible—just like going of your own free will to certain death. You come to a gas pocket, there is a flash, a roar, a shower of coal and rock." He shuddered at the memory, braced himself and went on: "But by morning the mine is clear of gas and it's not so dangerous to work in it."

"For the sake of his mates, a man did a thing like that," said Prokop solemnly. "Only for his friends will a man lay down his life."

"And were they killed ever?" asked Vasya, carried away by the story.

"Sometimes no, sometimes yes," answered Taras. "Plenty has been written about the soldier Koshka at Sevastopol who picked up an unexploded shell and threw it to safety. But in the mines there were hundreds of heroes like that. And not even a cross to mark where they died."

A silence fell on the gathering. Then Pastushenko said: "Yes, that was before my time, but I do remember the 'sledge men.' I had a share of that myself. And that was no arm-chair job either."

"Yes, that was hard labour all right."

"It's not only that it was heavy work," Pastushenko went on, "but it was degrading—harnessed like a dog to a sledge, and having to pull it through low tunnels, crawling on all fours."

"Ye-es," said Dedok, tapping the ground with his stick. "Torch men, sledge men, pick men, and now, pony-drivers. . . and then later, we too will have to go."

"Well, hardly. There will always have to be colliery managers, even under Communism," laughed Pastushenko.

"Yes, but it will be different managers then," muttered Dedok gloomily. Then he immediately checked himself as if ashamed of his weakness and, raising his voice in command, said: "Well, what are we waiting for? Come on. Get the ponies to the cage." With a gesture of finality he led the way out of the stable.

5

There was a bustle of movement in the stables. With a muttered "at last!" Vasya seized his horse and moved off towards the door. The other horses became restive, trampled about, and neighed in different voices: the stallions in the trumpet-like tones of their young and free days; the old mares hoarsely and tremblingly as if they were coughing. But all of them neighed impatiently as if they guessed why they were all decorated with ribbons and bows, why they had been given an extra ration of oats, why their drivers whispered so excitedly.

After Vasya and his Swallow went Semyon Nechitailo with the bay Marquis, then the quiet, half-blind Marusya, the light chestnut Rascal and the lame Miss, shaking with old age. As always, Merchant shied in the doorway, but his driver, the silent, gloomy Zagoruiko, gave him, instead of the usual smack on the neck, only an impatient jerk with the halter, and Merchant at once quietened down. Then came Nikifor with his Seagull. He did not need to use the halter; he simply whispered sadly: "Come on, Seagull" and she followed him, with her head hanging low, as if she were looking or smelling for something on the damp ground.

The last to leave the stable were Lesniak and Pastushenko. They formed the rear of this strange procession. It was a procession in single file, both of horses and men, walking, as is usual in a mine, with an unhurried, careful step which now seemed almost ceremonial. And, perhaps because the procession itself was unusual, everything in it seemed unusual. Even the miners' lamps seemed like lamps before an icon, lit specially for this occasion; they swayed mysteriously and solemnly. And there was a special tinkle when the drops of water fell from the roof, a special clinking when shod hoofs struck against rail. . . . The men walked without speaking, and in the silence of the mine one could hear their breathing, the trickling of water in the gutters along the road, and, from far ahead, the neighing of the tireless Swallow.

"Grandad is showing his age, don't you think?" said Pastushenko softly.

"The old always get older," answered Lesniak vaguely. He had no great love for Dedok.

"But you don't show your age, Prokop."

"I may not show it, but I get older all the same."

"Ah! But that's just the point. A lonely man ages quicker. You keep young when you've people around you."

"That's true enough."

"Grandad doesn't like me—doesn't like me at all."

"Oh! He doesn't like anybody."

"Yet he respected Comrade Voronko before me—even feared him."

"Yes, but that didn't come about all of a sudden."

"Pity Comrade Voronko isn't here," sighed Pastushenko. "He would enjoy this day with us. He always dreamed of this day."

"Why do you hark back to Andrei all the time?" asked Prokop.

"Difficult not to," retorted Pastushenko. "He's my godfather, so to speak. He was my sponsor when I joined the Party. How can I forget that?"

"He sponsored you, and I sponsored him. That makes you my grandson."

"Yes, I'm not forgetting that."

"You're not? It's good that you don't forget your relations."

For some time they walked in silence.

"Here is how I understand the situation," Pastushenko resumed. "I am Party organizer only temporarily—while Comrade Voronko is away." He never referred to Voronko as "Andrei" although he was five years older. "And when he returns . . ."

"Will he return?"

"Why not?"

"They don't all come back from there, you know."

"Ah, well, our Comrade Voronko will certainly come back."

"A rumour has been going around here, a bad one," said Prokop in a sudden whisper. "They're saying he has been killed."

"Don't you believe rumours like that. I got a letter from Comrade Voronko."

"Really? He doesn't write to me," said Prokop with a note of jealousy in his voice.

"He has no time for writing letters now. You must understand that. Even my letter was only three lines."

"And what does he say?" asked Prokop grudgingly. "How are things with him at the front?"

Pastushenko began eagerly to tell about Andrei's letter. Prokop listened without interruption, but he was thinking not of Comrade Voronko the former Party organizer of Steep Maria, but the quiet, grey-eyed Andrei, a boy from the godforsaken village of Chibiriaki, exactly as he was ten years before, when he came for the first time with his friend Viktor to Lesniak's house. He was wearing his father's jacket and, it seemed, his father's trousers, the legs stuck into the top of high boots. His peasant-type shirt was embroidered in blue cornflowers and held in at the waist with a tasseled cord. On his head was an old checked cap.

What a timid lad he had been then; how confused he was at the dinner-table. And then, taking his courage in both hands, he got to his feet and asked everybody to drink the health of Prokop's mother, "the miner grandmother"—and then was covered with confusion.

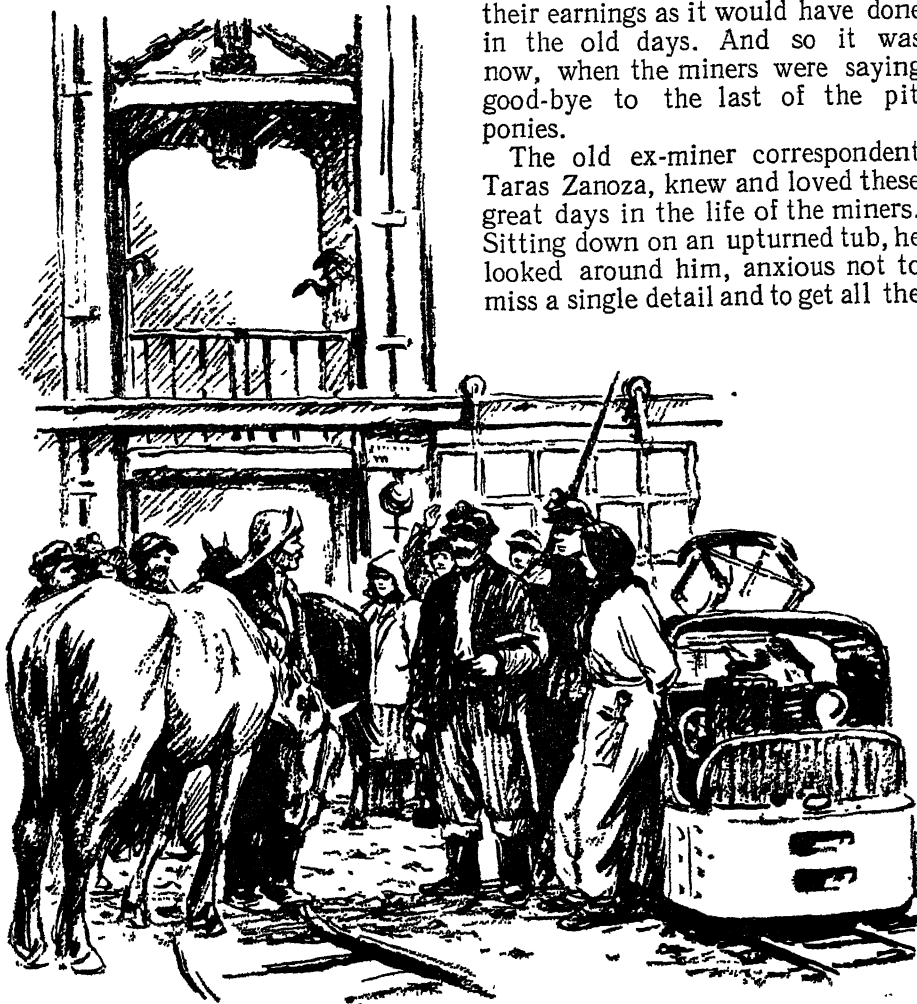
Prokop had rushed to him, taken him in his huge arms, pressed him to his heart and exclaimed in a broken voice: "Mother, would you accept this little miner as a grandson?" Everybody thought that it was just another of Prokop's jokes, but . . . scores of boys had gone through the capable hands of Prokop but only Andrei and Viktor entered his heart and nearly entered his family. He could confess now that it was Andrei he had wanted as a son-in-law, but his daughter Dasha preferred Viktor. And now there was neither Viktor nor Andrei. They were not in Lesniak's family; they were not in the Donbas. And Dasha had returned home alone.

Meanwhile the impatient Vasya and his horse had reached the yard at the foot of the pit shaft. It was ten o'clock and the night-shift workers

were pouring out of the cage in relays. Usually incomers did not wait for any time in the yard, but, seeing the approach of the be-ribboned ponies and knowing all about the leave-taking, they remained. The day-shift men also joined the crowd. Everybody waited to see the last of the pit ponies leaving, and there was a holiday spirit in the air.

It often happened like that in the mine. The work underground is heavy; but the miner has his own holiday "occasions." It is an occasion when tunnellers, after months of drilling and blasting, at last make an aperture through which they can stretch their hands to clasp the hands of their mates who have been working from the other end. It is an occasion when the hewers send up the first tub of coal from a new seam, or the last tub that completes the year's plan, like the last sheaf of rye that completes the harvesting. It is an occasion when a new machine is tried out in the colliery; its inventor is excited, the mechanics bustle around, and the miners give way in silence and respect to this machine which will make labour easier for all without prejudicing their earnings as it would have done in the old days. And so it was now, when the miners were saying good-bye to the last of the pit ponies.

The old ex-miner correspondent Taras Zanoza, knew and loved these great days in the life of the miners. Sitting down on an upturned tub, he looked around him, anxious not to miss a single detail and to get all the



...down in his notebook. Why he did it, he hardly knew himself, for his articles had to be short.

In the yard were standing two electric locomotives waiting to take away empty tubs. One was of a powerful type, the other a Lilliput for use in the smaller roads. It was this self-important little machine which had finally ousted the pit ponies from Steep Maria. The driver of the Lilliput, Katerina Afanasievna, a thin young woman in oil-stained dungarees, stood beside the machine. She would have passed for a boy if it had not been for the woollen shawl which she wore over her head, like all the women in the mine, to keep the coal dust out of her hair.

Vasya Pletnyov went over to her; she was to start her holiday the next day and Vasya was to take over the Lilliput from her. Swallow followed Vasya, pushed his nose against the machine's metal flanks, sniffed at it, licked it with his rough tongue and neighed his disapproval.

"Ah! He's too tough for you," said Katerina. "No good trying to bite this rival of yours."

Everybody laughed. Taras smiled and noted the incident in his book.

Nikifor and Seagull appeared and were immediately surrounded by the miners. Everybody knew Seagull; the older ones remembered her stormy past; now they all wanted to say good-bye to her, to stroke and pat her and say a kind word to her. Some of them knew that Nikifor too was leaving to work in the stables above-ground.

"To think of the tons of coal that you've hauled away, Seagull," said Matvei Zakorlyuka, the oldest miner of the Far West workings, who in recent years had aged quickly. "Thank you, old girl, you're a fine old worker."

"Thank you, kind friends," answered Nikifor on behalf of Seagull, with a choke in his voice. "Think kindly of us when we are gone," he added, as if he were leaving the colliery for ever instead of merely going to the stables on the surface.

Seagull, however, received all these greetings and pats indifferently. Long ago all the fire had died in her, the glint had vanished from her eyes, and there was no liveliness in her movements. She had even forgotten how to swish her tail, for in the mine there were no flies to bother her.

Prokop Lesniak slapped her on the back as if she were an old friend. "Never you mind, Seagull," he said cheerfully. "You'll have a fine rest and put on some flesh."

"But her eyes—she won't get them back," said someone quietly.

"Ah yes," sighed Matvei, "if only youth could come back. . . . Work in the colliery is all right nowadays." Matvei spoke not with sadness but with envy, and Taras understood his feelings. Taras himself had similar feelings at times. All his youth, all his miner's strength had been spent on work with pick and sledge and things like that. Now there were machines, and a man could work properly. . . . But there was no recapturing of youth.

Despite his "thorn" pen-name, which he had adopted in the 'twenties following the custom of worker-correspondents, Taras Zanoza was a tender-hearted, sentimental man. As he grew older, tears came easily to him. With tears of joy he would watch the changes taking place around him. Being an old man he fully appreciated their value. He acquired the old man's habit of seizing any pretext for recalling the old days,

not with a sigh of regret, but—like other old men of today—with bitter reproach, to praise the present and to curse the past.

"Young people don't understand it and don't feel it," he would say. "They take everything as their due; they have nothing to compare it with. Young folk sometimes even complain that things don't go perfectly—and of course they are right." Even the air that the young people breathed in the mines was not the air that Taras and his mates had breathed. Now there was proper ventilation.

Many times, unknown to his newspaper colleagues, Taras had tried to start writing a novel about colliery life. He would lock his door, arrange his notebooks on the table, sharpen his pencils—like most worker-correspondents he preferred to write in pencil and in notebooks—and then would fill and light his pipe.

The old shiver would run down his spine as if he were back again in the workings. He would hear rustlings, long-forgotten voices and the creaking of pit-props. The seam sang in a variety of voices, and he recognized the song. He could smell the coal, the dust, the decaying timbers, the stale water, the mould, the smoke of explosives. His memory would bring back the old mine with its gloomy galleries, narrow, steep ways and all its deaf, blind, rambling alleys. . . . In these deserted alleys wandered the "Miners' Devil" scaring any solitary walker; here stalked the "eye-eater," taking its toll of human sight; here crawled the torch man, challenging Death himself. . . . Vivid pictures followed one another in his mind's eye—but the words would not come.

In vain Taras smoked pipe after pipe; in vain he paced his monastic cell of a room, scratching his head. The pictures rushed to his mind, the words refused to come. He searched and searched for words but they escaped him and he grew angry with himself. "I'm like a horse that feels everything but can't put it into words." The old man had a big heart; but no talent.

Meanwhile the drivers bandaged the horses' eyes to save them from being blinded by the lighting at the pit-head. It was for this reason too that the leave-taking had been timed for the night hours. Seagull and Miss, however, needed no bandages; the poor horses were already practically sightless.

Again Taras reproached himself: "I just don't have the words to describe this picture—and what a picture! The yard all flooded with electric light—red, green, yellow signal lights. Locomotives, trains—just like a regular railway station in Moscow. And, with all this—horses, the last, blind horses. The fragments of an empire—eh? It's symbolic. Here it is before my very eyes, in this very yard, the end of one age and the beginning of another. And all this so far under the surface, too, in the very bowels of the earth. And up above it is winter and snow. There has been plenty of snow this cruel winter. . . . Snow, snow. . . . And somewhere far away from here, in the Karelian snows war is raging. And war is raging in Europe. And somewhere there is that Hitler, and somewhere that Chamberlain. All that has a connection with what is going on here in front of my eyes. But I can't get anything of all this into words." His feeling of frustration twisted up his face as if he were suffering pangs of toothache.

The first of the horses, Vasya's Swallow, was being led into the cage. Swallow made no fuss. It seemed that the bandages over his eyes had tamed him and scared him a little. The crowd watched the horse's movements

with the pitying smile that adults give to weak, dumb creatures—babies, birds, puppies.

“Well, good luck to you, Swallow. Enjoy your rest,” said Vasya, with a suggestion of a sob in his voice. He patted and stroked the animal, then suddenly he threw his arms around Swallow’s neck and kissed him full on the lips. Embarrassed, he turned away and hurried out of the cage. No one laughed.



The young lift-girl, whose damp shining oilskin and hood made her look like a sailor in a storm, started fixing the bars round the horse. “Grandad” Dedok came up to her.

“Frosia,” he said quietly, “you’d better send up a signal to tell them to go easy—just as if it were people.” Then he added to himself: “It’ll be me soon, too, like an old horse.” He felt a sudden fear. Had he spoken aloud? Recently he had been doing that sometimes. He looked around and saw that there was no one near him. Not far away Nikifor was standing with a group of miners. Dedok, leaning heavily on his knotted stick, walked over to him.

“I hear you are going to work with the horses,” he said, mainly for the sake of saying something.

“Yes, that’s so,” Nikifor answered guiltily.

“You know the wages in the stables aren’t so good as here?”

“I know. But it’s all the same to me.”

“So that’s how you feel?” Dedok gave Nikifor a sideways glance. “Well, well. Then I’ll tell them to put you and your horse on hauling pit-props. You’ll earn quite a bit that way.”

“Thank you very much for that, Comrade Dedok.”

Frosia sent four dashes on the buzzer—the signal that people were in the cage. The two-storeyed cage jerked, went down a little, then started going up slowly. Swallow’s head was glimpsed for the last time, then it disappeared. Swallow had left the mine.

“Good luck, Swallow,” murmured Vasya.

No one else spoke. Silence expressed the feeling of the men better and more fully than any words could.

A few minutes later the cage returned. Now it was Seagull’s turn. Nikifor was allowed to go up with his horse. The usual rule was broken because Seagull was a quiet, obedient horse who would make no trouble in the confined space of the lift.

Translated by Natalia Lukoshkova

OLGA'S PARTY

(Excerpt from a New Novel)

OLGA and her father had settled it all two weeks beforehand; she must certainly have an extra celebration for her twenty-fourth birthday. Their discussion had taken place on the first of September, which was also Olga's first day as a full-fledged teacher.

An unforgettable day, that first of September.

She arrived at school very early, forty minutes before lessons were due to start. In the teachers' room she took off her coat and hung it up on the antlers behind the big cupboard—just as her own teachers had done when she was going to school here.

There were only two other people in the room, neither of whom she knew. With them she did not feel at all shy; but she waited uneasily for Maria Pavlovna or Nina Karpovna to come in. She was sure she would be just as much afraid of them as in her school days, when Maria Pavlovna gave such terrible dictations that she just couldn't help making mistakes and getting bad marks time after time, and Nina Karpovna's trigonometry was a bugbear that Olga never really conquered up to the time she left school.

So far, however, neither of them had come, and Olga walked about the room glancing at this and that. It seemed strange that she was not here to be "spoken to seriously," or to ask for her schoolbag, taken away for making a noise in class, or to watch despondently while the head teacher wrote a note to her parents, asking them to come to the school at once to discuss "your daughter's bad marks." Now it was she who would "speak seriously" to children, take away their schoolbags, and write notes to their parents. Her power was great. But no, she thought, she would never abuse it, she would always be fair, she would never forget the miserable feeling of going home with that awful note or with equally unpleasant remarks in her report book.

These thoughts were still passing through her mind when Maria Pavlovna entered, puffing from the stairs, with her familiar rolling gait. A thin girl with thin plaits terminating in big bows and apprehension writ large on her face sidled in behind the teacher. Maria Pavlovna seated herself at the table without noticing Olga, laid down her brief-case—the one which Olga's class had given her for her birthday, there was the silver plate on it—took out an exercise-book, tore a page from it and began to write.

"So you think, my dear, that you can go shouting about the school and sliding down the banisters like a boy," she said as she wrote. "But if

you break your neck, it's we who have to answer for it. No, my dear, we'll just have a little talk with your father. Not your mother this time. Your mother only sighs and groans, and that's the end of it. She fancies you're a delicate, anaemic little blossom, but we know you're a real tomboy, always up to mischief. . . . Here you are."

The thin girl left the room, holding the note sorrowfully in her outstretched hand.

Olga plucked up courage to say "Good morning" to Maria Pavlovna; her former teacher turned and recognized her.

"Ah, Kolosova," she said, addressing her by her surname as is customary with older pupils, and in a voice very different from the awful tones she had used to the thin girl. "Yes, I've heard all about it, I knew my old pupil was going to be my colleague. I'll have to remember to call you by name and patronymic now, Olga. If I remember rightly, your father's Pavel Petrovich, isn't he? Splendid—Olga Pavlovna! Sounds quite well, doesn't it?" She turned to the teachers Olga did not know. "Let me introduce you—this is our new history teacher—Olga Pavlovna Kolosova. Once she was Olya, Olenka, Olga, then simply Kolosova. And now here she is—Olga Pavlovna."

Maria Pavlovna stopped and sat for a moment or two looking silently down at the exercise-book from which she had just torn a page to write to the thin girl's father. What were her thoughts? Perhaps she was recalling that far-off day when she herself ceased to be Masha, Manya, Mashutka and suddenly became Maria Pavlovna, the day that marked the end of childhood, adolescence and early youth, when adult life began with joys and sorrows quite different from those of the days when she had been called Masha, Manya and Mashutka.

Maria Pavlovna rose heavily from her chair, went up to Olga and laid a gentle hand on her head.

"My very best wishes, Olenka!"

She went out of the room. Other people came in. The head teacher, Natalia Stepanovna, introduced Olga all round. Then the bell went—Olga positively jumped at its sharp summons to class.

Everything went well at her lessons. The day passed without any special incident. The children were attentive. Olga went home gay and excited, and at once rang up her father at the institute. He congratulated her, and in the evening they began talking about celebrations for her twenty-fourth birthday.

"All right, splendid," said Pavel Petrovich. "You have your party—only you'll have to let me off. I'm a bit old for that sort of thing. I'd sooner get away somewhere quiet."

At last the long-awaited thirteenth of September arrived, and Olga spent the whole day making preparations, with Lusya Ratnikova helping her. Georgi Ratnikov also lent a hand.

Olga had racked her brains for a long time, wondering whom she could ask to assist her. She couldn't possibly manage alone, no fewer than twenty-three people were coming—college friends, friends from the Comsomol Committee, even school friends. She telephoned one after another, but they all seemed to be busy during the day. In the evening they would love to help, they would do anything—but that was too late. The best of

all would have been Varya; in fact if she had been able to come the roles would have been reversed, she would have organized everything and Olga would have been the assistant. But Varya was busy at her factory and she too would be free only in the evening.

Olga telephoned Lusya as an afterthought, when she had already given up hope. She had heard at college that Lusya's baby, a boy, had been born two months before; she had intended to go and see her friend, but kept putting it off—how could she give up meeting Viktor Zhuravlyov even once for the sake of some baby or other! Now, however, it occurred to Olga that perhaps Lusya would like to come to the party, she must be tired of staying at home with the child. And it would be interesting, too, to see what Georgi thought of the baby, now it was there.

Olga could not forget the day when she went to the Ratnikovs' to find out what the trouble was between them. She could not forget Lusya's unhappy eyes and the hopeless gesture with which Georgi declared that there was no living with such a wife, he was sick of that nincompoop, of her ugliness, he was going away, he didn't see why he should bury himself alive.

Georgi himself came to the telephone when Olga rang up. She greeted him curtly and asked for Lusya. He said Lusya could not come at the moment, she was nursing the baby.

"You know, Olga," he said, and she was startled by the delight in his voice, "it's really awfully interesting! Just think—were we all like that once?"

"I rather fancy we were," Olga answered. "By the way—I'm not quite sure whether to congratulate you or not. I don't know yet what you think of this addition to your family. Maybe it's just another fetter on your freedom of individuality?"

"Oh, drop it, Olga!" Georgi interrupted. "I don't need any lectures, better congratulate me and let it go at that!"

"I do, then—and with all my heart."

"Well, that's all right—thank you. And now I'll hand over to Lusya, she's right here, pulling the receiver away from me."

"Olga, I've rung you up a hundred and forty times," said Lusya. "But I could never—"

"Lusya, I'll explain everything later!" cried Olga. "But now—a hundred and forty thousand congratulations! I'm most awfully glad for your sake, Lusya! And please note that the thirteenth of September is my birthday!"

"All right—we'll be there—Georgi and I."

After she had hung up it occurred to Olga that Lusya's mother probably helped with the baby, so Lusya would have time to spare—why not ask her to come and lend a hand with the preparations? She picked up the telephone again. Lusya said—certainly she would come, only she would have to bring the baby, he must be fed regularly, at certain hours. Olga would find somewhere to put him so that he would not fall down.

All three arrived on the morning of the thirteenth—Lusya, once more slender and gay, her face unblemished by dark patches, with Georgi and the baby. It was Georgi who carried his son—and in a most experienced, efficient manner.

"Why, of course I'm used to it!" he said in answer to a remark from Olga. "I'm always fussing about with Mitka. I'll soon be able to write a

manual for young fathers. There was one time—it was a Sunday—Lusya left me with him and went off to the pictures. I didn't know where she'd gone, I thought she'd just slipped out for a minute. There I was left standing in the garden like a fool. Lusya didn't come, her mother wasn't there either, she was at work. I was stuck like that three mortal hours, with Mitka yelling like mad. Some people thought it very funny—I didn't—and others started sympathizing and advising me. One woman offered to feed him—"I'm a nursing mother myself," she said, "let me take the young man, you're both getting desperate, poor things." I can just see myself giving Mitka a dinner from God-knows-where! My word, I had it in for Lusya!"

All this time Lusya had been in Olga's room unwrapping Mitka and changing his nappies, while Olga and Georgi stood by the door. Olga pulled him out into the passage.

"And it doesn't upset you, all of this? Doesn't make you feel sick?"

Georgi scratched his ear uncomfortably.

"Don't bring all that up, Olga—please. Everyone's a fool sometime in his life."

Olga thought how right her father's friend Fyodor Ivanovich Makarov, the district Party secretary, had been when he advised her not to be too hasty with conclusions or measures of public censure for Georgi, when he said she had better wait a bit, perhaps things would work themselves out and the young couple would become good friends again.

Yes, Fyodor Ivanovich's foresight was surprising, but Olga was even more impressed by Lusya's patience and tact, although she could not fully appreciate the difficulty of the test which life had set the young wife and which she had passed with honours. Yes, it had been a very big test for Lusya. There had been moments when her marriage, her love, had hung by a thread. One clumsy movement—and the thread would have snapped. But Lusya never made that clumsy movement, not once. She never complained of Georgi, and even to him she never bemoaned her fate. Her love helped her to find the right note. It was not experience, it was not her mother's counsel, it was only love that led her through that ominous calm, which her life with Georgi had been before the child was born. She felt instinctively that she must wait until the child was there; if nothing changed after that, then there was no help for it: she and Georgi would have to part.

Sure enough, Georgi was absolutely enchanted with his son, and with his joy, his love and friendship for Lusya returned. He was a different man. While Olga and Lusya were busy in the kitchen, Georgi walked up and down the room with Mitka, sang to him, struck notes on the piano, switched on the wireless, and imitated the cries of animals and birds.

Their combined efforts had everything ready by six o'clock; the table was laid and looked splendid; the guests could come as soon as they liked.

The first to arrive was Viktor Zhuravlyov. He came straight from the factory where he had appeared that morning, to everybody's amazement, in his best suit. He handed a parcel to Olga with "many happy returns." She introduced him to Lusya and then to Georgi who—still holding the baby—took him into the study where they sat smoking and talking. While Olga was opening the parcel, Lusya said softly: "He looks nice. He's got really masculine hands and kind eyes." Olga listened with pride



tinged with jealousy—so she'd managed to notice his hands and eyes already. . . . The parcel contained an old book in a dark leather binding, a book of good counsel to young women about how to live happily.

"Just look at that!" cried Lusya. "That's a really rare book, it must have cost a lot of money!" But to Olga it was worth more than all the wealth in the world, because on the first page Viktor had written: "I want to read this book with you, our whole lives long, always together."

Vera was the second guest. She too had a present for Olga.

Eight o'clock brought a constant succession of rings at the bell. Nina Semyonova came, and Tonya Babochkina, and the district Comsomol secretary Kolya Osipov with his wife. Nina Semyonova had brought a fifth-year student with her, three years younger than herself. He was fat, with the shining, vacuous face of a hairdresser's dummy, but she gazed at him with adoration and had no eyes for anybody else. Olga welcomed him politely for Nina's sake.

In the middle of all the bustle, a telegram arrived from Kostya, wishing his sister many happy returns and saying how sorry he was that he could not come.

It turned out when they sat down to table that they were not twenty-three, but twenty-seven. Varya said they must leave a place for Pavel Petrovich.

"He's not coming," said Olga. "He's going straight from the institute to the Makarovs. He gave me this gold watch in the morning and said he'd leave the young folks to themselves."

Varya was both glad and sorry that Pavel Petrovich would not be there. Although she had kept telling herself that it would be better not to see him any more, nevertheless she had come to the birthday party just in order to see him—him and nobody else. If he was not to be there—what was the sense of coming?

Lusya proposed the first toast. She said that Olga was a splendid girl, and although there were plenty of splendid girls in the world, they should all be prized, cherished and made much of, and there was one here whose health should be drunk and who should be kissed all round. She took just a sip of champagne—as a nursing mother she could not take more—and set the example by kissing Olga herself. There were cheers, others followed her example, and in all the noise and merriment the fat student managed to plant a smacking kiss on Olga's cheek. She wiped it off with a napkin and stole a glance at Viktor, who for some reason was sitting a long way off. He had seen the fat student's kiss and was looking black as thunder. Olga saw that he was watching her and rubbed her cheek still harder, looking as annoyed and disgusted as she could.

Champagne corks popped again and again. Pavel Petrovich had told Olga to take all the money she needed for the party, and glanced into the big painted box where all members of the family without exception put the money they earned. Now the room was filled with chatter, people calling from end to end, all talking at once, somebody getting up to propose a toast and nobody listening—just as though they were still first or second year students. It was natural—with the exception of Kolya Osipov, Viktor Zhuravlyov, Varya and two or three more, none of the guests had yet launched out on their own, they were still at college, either as undergraduates or as post-graduate students. They had not yet been shaken up by life as Lusya and Georgi had. They had not yet said good-bye to their first youth. It was still close to them—fresh, intoxicating as spring, putting quicksilver in their tongues, lifting them from their chairs, flinging them into raptures of friendship and good fellowship.

"Comrades, comrades!" shouted Georgi, trying to make himself heard. "Am I allowed to speak or not? The point is that we're still all boys and girls, pupils, just children. But Olga Pavlovna Kolosova is a teacher. She must be treated with proper respect. Better not blurt out the first thing that comes into your heads in the presence of Olga Pavlovna. . . But I'll just tell you one little story. It's about a swimming instructor at a physical training college. He was a famous instructor. Trained hundreds of splendid swimmers. All winter his pupils did land drill in a special gym, learned the strokes to perfection. Then the instructor let them loose in the swimming pools and after that in the rivers, lakes and seas. Well, one day he missed his footing and fell into the water. The students waited for him to come to the surface, but he didn't appear. Somebody said: 'Gosh, what lungs Semyon Semyonovich has! Look how long he's staying under!' Well, the upshot was that divers had to go down for him. He was drowned. You see, he'd never been in the water before except to take a bath and he couldn't swim a stroke." There was a burst of laughter, and Georgi concluded: "The main thing for a teacher is not to be able to do what he teaches, but to be able to make others do it."

"Thank you," said Olga. "Is that a nasty smack at me? Maybe you're trying to hint that I don't know history?"

There was more laughter, interrupted by a hearty voice from the door.

"All your coats and hats and umbrellas have been loaded on to a lorry and carried off!"

It was Colonel Borodin. He was in mufti—a loose jacket over an embroidered homespun shirt, his trousers thrust into top-boots, looking like the chairman of a prosperous collective farm. Heavens, thought Olga, how

on earth did I come to forget Uncle Vasya? What was I thinking about? . . . She ran to him and flung her arms round him.

"All right, all right," he rumbled. "We all know that good friends don't wait for an invitation to a birthday party, they come themselves. Aunt Natasha'll be along in a minute, she's just gone to get a cream cake."

"But why? Why did she bother?" cried Olga, excitedly making room for Borodin at the table. "We've got heaps of cakes."

Olga's friends had all heard about her uncle who was an intelligence officer, and were looking at him with a good deal of interest and hero-worship.

"Where's your Dad?" asked Borodin.

"Father's gone to Fyodor Ivanovich. He said he didn't want to be in the way."

"Rubbish! What's all that about being in the way? We're going to be in the way!" He went into the study and stayed there for some time. He himself opened the door to his wife Natalia Alexandrovna, a merry, round-faced woman who was in the local theatre company. He came back with her into the dining-room and whispered to Olga: "Get out some more to eat. Three more are coming." But there was no need to get out anything more because Pavel Petrovich, Fyodor Ivanovich and his wife Alevtina Iosifovna had called in at a shop on the way and brought plenty of good things with them.

There was such a noise at the table that it was clearly time for someone to take charge before everybody was hoarse and deaf. Kolya Osipov proposed a song.

"That's the style," said Fyodor Ivanovich approvingly. "Joint activities make for unity. I see you're a good organizer."

"Well—I mean—why not, Fyodor Ivanovich!" stammered the Comsomol secretary, who had certainly never expected to find himself sitting at table with the secretary of the district Party committee.

"No, it's quite right, a good idea, I propose that we adopt it and include it in the minutes. Eh? What shall we sing?"

"Let's have the 'Students' Farewell," cried Tonya Babochkina. "You know—'The town has long been sleeping. . . .'"

"Good! Let's!"

It was a melodious, lyrical song, but only Olga's college friends knew it; the others listened and tried to join in the chorus usually getting it wrong. More student songs followed. Pavel Petrovich, Borodin, Natalia Alexandrovna, Fyodor Ivanovich and Alevtina Iosifovna went into the study.

Varya looked pale and unhappy. She had drunk nothing. She felt alien and out-of-tune, awkward and dull in her idiotic pining. But to rise and go was beyond her power. She seemed glued to her chair. Another one who felt uncomfortable among all these strangers was Viktor Zhuravlyov, a man slow at making friends. He watched Olga the whole time, jealous whenever she sat down beside anybody, whispered to anybody or put her arm round anybody's shoulders. He only longed for the party to come to an end.

Nina Semyonova was urging something on her fat student who shook his head. Finally she rapped on a plate with her knife.

"Stasik knows a grand song. Please, Stasik!"

There was general applause. The massive Stasik rose and in a voice which Olga's grandfather would have called "custardy," informed the company that the leaves are falling, Madame, and autumn is drunken with colour. Come, come to me as you promised, I await you like a golden

dream . . . to which Madame replied that she would not come to him because he had hesitated too long.

• Nina listened to her singer enraptured; every hen-sparrow thinks her cock-sparrow sings like a nightingale.

After that they all sang a partisan song, and Borodin came out of the study and stood in the doorway, joining in.

"Who can play the piano here?" he asked when it was finished.

People looked at each other uncertainly. Nina said she had once learned a bit when she was a child, but did not get very far with it. She could manage scales, but that was about all. The fat student said he knew "Chopsticks" and one old foxtrot—"On the Mississippi"—not very well, but they often danced to it at the hostel.

"You're a fine lot!" remarked Borodin, and turned towards the open door of the study. "Fyodor Ivanovich!" he called. "Come in here. Where did you study music?"

"Oh, just here and there," said Makarov, coming out. "In the Pioneer club and then the Comsomol clubs. Used to strum with one finger till they got mad and threw me out." He sat down at the piano. "What shall I play?"

"Fyodor Ivanovich!" Varya plucked up courage to ask Makarov. "Sing the song about the wicket gate—please. Please do!"

"Come on, Fyodor Ivanovich," said Borodin. "You can't refuse when you're asked like that!"

Fyodor Ivanovich started, and Pavel Petrovich and Alevtina Iosifovna joined in.

*Through the gate of the quiet garden
Glide in with silent tread,
Remember your shawl, soft and warm,
A lacy scarf on your head.*

Yes, Varya would glide into that garden, happily, softly if only he would call her like that, if only, if only—she would fly like a bird into that garden. For him alone to see her; for him alone to hear her.

Varya did not even notice that the song was ended, and that Borodin was singing to Fyodor Ivanovich's improvised accompaniment:

*On the forest border
An ancient oak is sighing.
Beneath its spreading branches
A partisan is lying.
Still he is, and quiet
As though sleeping at his ease.
The golden curls upon his head
Flutter in the breeze.
By him sits his mother
Old and worn with pain.
With tears thickly falling
She sings this sad refrain.
"Baby whom I tended,
Youth with life ahead—
Now my heart is empty,
Now my son lies dead."*

"That song follows me everywhere," said Borodin when they had finished. "I heard it for the first time in the middle of the night in 1944, in a town in East Prussia."

Nobody spoke. In 1944, in East Prussia? Many felt a chill creep down their spines. Where had a Soviet intelligence man heard that partisan song in the middle of the night, a terrible wartime night, in the enemy rear? Was it sung by Soviet people being taken away to be shot, or perhaps by prisoners in cramped barracks? Borodin did not say, and nobody asked.

Then the older folks started up another song.

*Whiteguard bayonets flashing
By the distant river. . . .*

More old songs followed—songs about Budyonny and Voroshilov, the "Varshavianka" and many more—stirring songs, rousing songs, songs that seemed to call to great deeds. The young people joined in, even Viktor Zhuravlyov became animated. He loved these songs from past days.

After some time the older generation grew tired of singing and went back into the study. The table and chairs were pushed aside, somebody put on a record and dancing began.

Borodin came in again while they were changing a record.

"You know," he said, passing his hand lightly over the top of the radio-gramophone, "there was a time thirty years ago when we'd have given our heads for something like this. . . . Want to hear about it?"

There was a general chorus of: "Yes! Tell us! Please!"

"Well, it was on one of the southern fronts in the Civil War. We were in trenches on the north bank of a river, and the Whiteguards on the other bank—in their own trenches. So we had the river between us. It was winter. The water was frozen. And we were having pretty hard frosts all the time. We shivered in our trenches and cursed those damned Whites. If we tried to attack they mowed us down with machine-guns. Well, of course, when they showed themselves we did the same. And then—just imagine—some gramophone records were sent to our division, speeches by Comrade Lenin, his own voice! One of them was *What Is Soviet Power?* and the other—*Address to the Red Army*. Now—men often came to the forward trenches from our political section and talked to the enemy soldiers through speaking trumpets—told them they were being deceived, they should drop their weapons and come over to us. The Whiteguards would usually answer with machine-guns. But now here we were with speeches by Comrade Lenin himself. How could we manage to hear them, and to get them heard on the other side of the river, too! After all, it wasn't just anybody's speeches, it was Comrade Lenin himself! Even *they* would listen to that! But the question was—how was it to be done?"

"You see, we had no gramophone. That was the first problem. We organized a whole cavalry raid, our men ranged a hundred-and-eighty kilometres through our own villages; then they broke through the enemy flank into his rear. They left six killed and three more barely got away, but they found a gramophone in a kulak's house and brought it back with them. For a whole week that gramophone went up and down the trenches, into the dug-outs, into the cottages in the rear. Everybody wanted to hear Comrade Lenin. It was grand—Lenin himself speaking to us! At last we chose a dark night when everything was quiet, no wind, nothing, and shouted across to the enemy through our speaking trumpet that we were going to let them

hear a speech by Comrade Lenin, Lenin's own voice. We put the gramophone on the parapet, turned the horn towards them and set it going. And there was dead silence in their trenches. They were all very quiet, listening."

Borodin took a cigarette out of his case, lighted it and went on.

"But you see, the trouble was that across the river they could not make out the words. We put on the other record and it was the same thing—we could hear it, but they couldn't. They began shouting over to us: 'Louder! Make it louder!' But how could we, it wasn't something like this!" He stroked the polished radio-gramophone again. "I can tell you we felt sick. We racked our brains—couldn't think what to do. But there was one lad, a clever chap he was, Shurka Ryabchikov, and he had an idea. 'I've got it,' he said, 'I'll tell them the whole of it in my own words!' 'All right, try it,' we said. So he took the speaking trumpet and shouted to the other side: 'Hey, you there, I'll tell you everything that Comrade Lenin said. You won't pot me?' And they shouted back: 'No, come out and tell us.' So Shurka got up on the parapet and started off. 'You so-and-so's, you don't believe in Soviet power? Listen to what Comrade Lenin says. You know yourselves that there are still a lot of defects in the organization of Soviet power, he says. It can't do away with all the evils of the past in a minute, he says. But it does give you, you dunderheads, the chance to go forward to Socialism.'

"Well, they listened on that side in perfect silence. I believe they hardly breathed. They never fired a shot, of course. After all, who was it there in the front lines? No officers, only soldiers. And Lenin's speech as Shurka Ryabchikov gave it over did its work all right—the next morning eighteen husky lads came over to us! So there you are! . . . Well, what about another dance?"

But for some reason nobody felt like dancing. Some were looking at Borodin, some at the radio-gramophone.

"Do you know if recordings of those speeches still exist?" asked Viktor Zhuravlyov.

"Why, of course," said Borodin. "What do you think?"

"It would be wonderful to hear them."

"Would you like to?" asked Borodin. "I can arrange that for you."

"Of course we would!"

Borodin went into the study, rang up his mother-in-law, then the garage, and in twenty minutes—they had not even finished clearing the table and laying it for tea—he reappeared, carrying a black box, rather like a typewriter case.

"I've got some rare things in here," he said. "Who would you like to hear first?" He put on a record without letting anybody see the label. The high-pitched voice of an old man spoke. "People can develop only through trials." "Who's that? Which of you knows? Leo Tolstoy. 'Thoughts for Every-Day.' He's reading it himself. And now listen to this." A voice was reading verses as poets do, declaiming with a slight singsong. "That's Valeri Bryussov," said Borodin. Then they heard Kuprin reading one of his stories in a strong, rich voice, and Veresayev reading a fragment from his "Notes of a Doctor."

Olga's guests had forgotten time and place, they sat spellbound. As soon as one record came to an end they asked for another, another, and another.

A ringing voice full of inspired passion came from the instrument: "Marx said that 'the spectre of Communism is hovering over Europe'; today Communism is no longer a spectre, but a real and mighty force, finding its embodiment in the U.S.S.R. . . ."

"Kirov!" said Borodin. "And now listen to this" He put on another record, and as soon as the calm, quiet, clear words were heard, everybody cried: "Stalin! Stalin!" Yes, it was Stalin, reporting to the Party congress on the work of the Central Committee.

"And now here's what I promised you," Borodin turned to Zhuravlyov. "Listen to Comrade Lenin."

"Soviet power is not some magic talisman. It cannot at once cure all the ills of the past, the illiteracy, the lack of culture, the results of a savage war, the results of capitalism. But it provides the possibility to go on to Socialism. It makes it possible for those who are oppressed to rise and take the whole management of the state into their own hands to an ever greater degree, the whole management of economy, the whole management of production.

"Soviet power is the road to Socialism found by the masses of toilers, and for that reason it is the true road, and for that reason it is invincible."

When Lenin's voice fell silent they wanted to applaud, and at the same time they wanted to hear more and yet more.

Even Varya forgot her misery, carried away by voices from the past that summoned to the future.

"Now last of all I'm putting on a record especially for you young folks—it's up to you to say who's speaking and what it's about."

Borodin switched on the radio-gramophone. The voice was muffled and husky, nobody could possibly recognize it because nobody had ever heard it, but the words left no room for doubt.

"It's from *How the Steel Was Tempered*," said Olga quietly. Borodin nodded. "Is that Ostrovsky himself speaking?" Borodin nodded again.

Nikolai Ostrovsky's voice continued. "Pavel, his chin resting in his hand, sat lost in thought. His whole life passed swiftly before his mind's eye, from his childhood to the present. How had these twenty-four years of his been lived? Worthily or unworthily? He went over them again, year by year subjecting them to sober, impartial judgement, and he found to his immense relief that he had not done so badly with his life. Mistakes there had been, the mistakes of youthful inexperience, and chiefly of ignorance. But in the stormy days of struggle for Soviet power he had been in the thick of the fighting and on the crimson banner of revolution there were a few drops of his life's blood."

The black disc ceased to revolve and all sat thinking: How had their lives been passed? Had they slept through the great days of building Socialism? If their blood was not on the banners, were there not at least a few lines about their work for the people to be found in the chronicles of our days? And they too became impartial judges of themselves in that moment.

The night was almost over, morning was near. It was time for the guests to leave the Kolosovs' home, but they felt reluctant to go. Something of a radiant wonder had appeared to them in this night, something which made them feel themselves a closely-knit family, a militant body advancing to a common goal under a single banner.

Smile of Friendship

*To Anna Seghers with the deepest
admiration for her penetrating talent.*

ON THE day the newspapers reported that work had been started in Cossack Gully on the foundation pit for another great power dam on the Volga, Viktor Volnukhin, operating his Uralets excavator in the northern sector of the dam site, was interrupted in his work by the unexpected appearance of two strangers.

The work had not yet got into its proper stride. For the past two days Volnukhin, as he dug his scoop into the dry earth, had been trying to induce the lorry drivers to help him organize the work so as to maintain a steady, uninterrupted pace. But the drivers were all new to the job, and so the lorries would either drive up all at once or else there would be a long interval with no lorries at all, and Volnukhin, not to waste time, would loosen the thick layers of earth or level out the slopes of the cut, using the teeth of his huge scoop as a rake.

He had expended no little energy—not to speak of the strain on his vocal chords—in his effort to find some point of contact with the drivers. And now, when at last some co-ordination seemed to have been achieved between the excavator and the long chain of lorries moving up to it, and when Viktor Volnukhin was once again conscious of that familiar thrill of pleasure which smoothly organized work invariably gave him—just at this moment these two turned up from nowhere and ruined everything.

They must have taken a short cut across the steppe, for they were covered in dust from head to foot and their eyes and teeth gleamed strangely out of their black faces. They came into sight on the edge of the pit shouting and gesticulating wildly. Dumping a three-cubic-metre bucketful of earth into the nearest lorry, Viktor Volnukhin stopped the scoop mechanism, stuck his head out of the window of his cab and shouted angrily:

“What’s the trouble over there?”

He did not hear exactly what the two strangers said in reply, but he thought he caught the words “stop” and “dangerous”—enough to tell him it had to do with discontinuing the work.

The next lorry was already awaiting its ten-ton load of earth. Several more lorries came bumping slowly down the hillside into the gully, raising clouds of dust that caught the setting sun. The excavator stood

with its scoop raised like a huge fist threatening someone, and the disengaged engine roaring.

"What the hell do you want?" shouted Volnukhin, seized by such a paroxysm of fury that the tips of his fingers went numb and his lips trembled.

The lorries came up one after another. They already formed a long queue on the descent into the pit. The rhythm of their motion, the joyous sense of speed and harmony—all had vanished.

The two strangers had already skirted the bluff and were hurrying toward the excavator, tired and out of breath, talking in loud, excited voices to the lorry drivers who had got out of their cabs to see what was amiss. Volnukhin also alighted.

"What's the trouble?"

"Stop the machine, you can't dig here!" said the taller of the two, who had an empty sleeve thrust into the pocket of his jacket.

"Thank the lord we got here in time!" panted the other, a small, elderly man with a moustache. "When I heard they were going to start digging in Cossack Gully I dashed right over to Vadim Mikhailovich here. 'We've got to drop everything and run over to the gully right away,' I said. And all the way over here I was terribly afraid we'd be too late."

He held his cap in his hands and kept wiping the sweat from his large baldish skull, but only succeeded in smearing the black dirt all over his head. The handkerchief he was using had acquired the general colour of a rag used to wipe machines.

"What the dickens is all this about?" Viktor Volnukhin shouted, seizing the small elderly man by his coat lapels and shaking him. "Why can't we dig here?"

The little man proved stronger than he looked. He took Volnukhin by the wrists and squeezed so hard that the lad quieted down at once.

"Cut that out," he said. "You can't dig here because there's death down there," and he tapped at the dry dusty ground with the toe of his boot. "Understand?"

"There's an unexploded German torpedo just about here," explained the one-armed man calmly. "You only have to hit it with your shovel for it to blast everything around sky-high—at least as far as that lorry on top," he added scanning the excavation site with a practised eye.

"How do you know about this torpedo?" Volnukhin growled, eyeing the strangers suspiciously and secretly hoping they were just practical jokers and that he'd manage to make up for lost time before the floodlights were turned on.

"How do we know? Why, Vadim Mikhailovich and I and the whole blinking regiment saw the thing come down. Thought it was the last thing we'd ever see, but it didn't explode. It made a hole this big—no, bigger, where it went in," the little man spread out his arms as wide as he could. "We took up positions over there and the mine stayed on this side of the river. And here it is waiting for you now."

"That's a fact. And they're no joke, these things. One of them exploded just outside of town and wiped out nearly a whole block," the one-armed man confirmed.

"There wouldn't have been much left of our regiment either if the darn thing had gone off that time. We were crowded in this hollow like

herrings in a barrel, waiting to cross the river. But she didn't explode—waiting for you, I suppose. So when I saw in the papers you'd started digging down here my hair fairly stood on end, or it would've if I hadn't been bald these ten years. . . . If you've got any suspicions of us, here's our papers. There, I'm a watchman from that works over there—you can see the smokestacks from here. And Vadim Mikhailovich is our designing engineer. Both of us served in a guards regiment in these parts during the war."

The chimneys of a large factory could indeed be seen on the horizon beyond the river, staining the pale steppe sky with a murky haze. The strangers' papers too proved to be in order, and after consulting with the shift foreman, Volnukhin reluctantly stopped his engine. The strangers were given a lift in a ten-ton lorry bound for the new town which had sprung up in advance of the construction job. There they were taken to the department at construction headquarters which had charge of clearing the site of land mines and unexploded shells and bombs left over from the war. Yes, this building job had such a department, for what was now the site of one of the biggest construction undertakings of our time had once been a great battlefield. The entire area was so thickly sown with metal that the department, headed by Colonel Sokolov, a veteran army engineer, had its hands full.

Colonel Sokolov listened to the story of the torpedo with the keenest interest. He was a tall man, still youthful in appearance, if a trifle heavy and running to fat, as is often the case with soldiers in peacetime after long years of strenuous army life. He at once spread out a large-scale army map heavily marked in coloured pencils, and quickly located the sharp, knee-like bend that was Cossack Gully and the stretch where Volnukhin's excavator stood.

"Is this it?" he inquired, pointing with his pencil.

It was, confirmed the engineer and the watchman, and also Volnukhin, who as the party most vitally concerned was also present, after a glance at the map with a practised eye—for all three were war veterans.

The colonel marked the spot with a big query in red pencil and asked his visitors to recount all the circumstances connected with the dropping of what the comrades called a torpedo: the day, the hour, the type of aircraft that had carried it and the approximate altitude from which it had been dropped. He even wanted to know how it had fallen: vertically or at an angle, and what sort of noise it had made in flight. As he listened, the colonel paced up and down the room, cracking his finger joints absently, then stopping to bend over the map, humming or whistling softly to himself as if he were alone in the room, and then firing another round of questions: how deep a hole had the torpedo made when it fell, had anyone tried to measure the depth, how were the edges of the hole shaped, and what sort of soil was it. . . .

The sun had not yet set over the steppe when the colonel received the telephone message from the site that the men he had sent to the spot had established the presence of a large body of metal lying in the centre of Volnukhin's sector at a considerable depth. The colonel ordered the place roped off, a sentry posted and a platoon of sappers sent there early the following morning.

The job promised to be both difficult and dangerous, and the colonel decided to supervise the digging and removing of the bomb. For this he would need calm nerves and a clear head, and consequently a good night's

sleep. Before retiring he took his usual cold shower and rub-down, threw both windows wide open and got into bed, pulling the blanket up to his chin. But something told him that this ritual would not have the desired effect tonight, that he would not be able to sleep after all. His thoughts kept reverting to the task ahead.

The stories of the witnesses coincided in every detail. The preliminary examination of the area had confirmed their evidence. Yet there was something in all this that baffled the colonel, notwithstanding his extensive technical knowledge and practical experience.

"No, confound it, this is not going to be simple!" he said aloud. He sat up in bed and reviewed again every scrap of information he had been able to elicit about the bomb.

Judging by the depth to which it had embedded itself in the ground so hard and dry that even the powerful excavator scoop had difficulty in biting into it, the missile must be of a very substantial calibre. The most sensitive instruments had barely been able to detect it through the heavy layers of earth under which it lay. It could not be one of the ordinary one-ton bombs the fascists had so lavishly expended on the city in an effort to weaken the fighting spirit of its defenders. These bombs were usually dropped from a great height and they came down vertically, not at an angle as the witnesses here recalled. Nor could it be one of those rocket missiles which Hitler had used against London. Those were fired from a ramp on the ground; this one had been carried by a plane. Perhaps it really was a naval torpedo.

"What can it be?" the colonel said aloud as he wrestled with his insomnia.

Finally he got up, threw his tunic over his shoulders and went over barefoot to the window. Here from the fourth floor he had a broad view of the construction site dotted with electric lights. Beyond lay the big city stretched out along the river banks and twinkling in the darkness like the Milky Way spilled out upon the Earth. At that moment a furnace was being tapped at one of the city's steel mills and a crimson glow, like the fiery breath of some unseen giant, quivered over the works, bathed in the black water of the river and cast a tremulous reflection in the sky.

Suddenly the colonel had a vivid recollection of another lurid glow that had hung over the entire opposite bank of the river; he saw the skeletons of buildings, silhouetted starkly against that crimson background, staring into the blackness out of the bloodshot sockets of their empty windows; he remembered how the thunder of explosions and rattle of machine-guns had merged in an incessant roar as if some gigantic machine were at work somewhere deep under the ground; and how terrifying it had been, even for a seasoned soldier like himself, when the din would suddenly subside and all would be silent.

And a long-forgotten feeling of bitter hatred for those who had thrust through to this city in the heart of Russia, burned and maimed it and left behind a deadly weapon which now, so many years after the war had ended, threatened to wreak untold damage, awoke in the heart of the old soldier.

To shut out the sight of that ruddy glow still shimmering in the night sky, the colonel lowered the blind and bent again over his chart on which he recorded everything his sappers had unearthed in the course of their work. He could barely wait for the dawn, and as soon as it was light he went out and, hailing the first truck going his way, he headed for Cossack Gully.

He found his men already on the spot. They were having their breakfast, their spoons clattering noisily against their messins. The sentry had already tramped down a path around the roped-off area in the course of the night. Beside this path squatted Volnukhin, nervously smoking a cigarette.

"They've gone and opened a blinking canteen here, Comrade Colonel," he growled. "We've got to start digging right away. Every minute's precious!" And he flung his unfinished cigarette away in disgust.

Taking every possible precaution, the colonel marked off where they were to dig, and the work commenced. Before long one of the shovels struck something hard. The colonel ordered the men out of the pit and climbed down himself, and with his bare hands carefully scraped aside the loose earth. It was a false alarm; the hard object turned out to be a boulder. Around ten o'clock they again struck something solid. This time their cautious pokings revealed a rusty surface of metal. Again the diggers were ordered out of the pit.

As he had always done at the front when there was a dangerous job to do, the colonel called for volunteers. Out of the many who responded he chose two old soldiers whom he had known during the war. All the others were instructed to move to shelter behind the bluff some distance away. The colonel and the two volunteers lowered themselves cautiously into the pit and proceeded to dig around the missile.

At midday the colonel climbed out of the pit and ordered the derrick lorry he had called to move over to the edge of the excavation. A cable was passed around the steel cylinder of the torpedo, which was then carefully hoisted up. The lorry, its engine whining, backed away from the pit, the missile, twice the size of a man, swinging slowly on the hook; from a distance it looked for all the world like a fat cigar with one end bitten off. The men watched the operation with breathless interest.

The thing to be done now was to remove the bomb to a safe distance in the steppe. Fearing that the driver might make some foolish mistake in his nervousness, the colonel opened the door of the cab, wiped his boots on the running board and calmly sat down next to him. The steel cigar swayed slowly back and forth, its rusty sides looking rustier every minute as the air dried them.

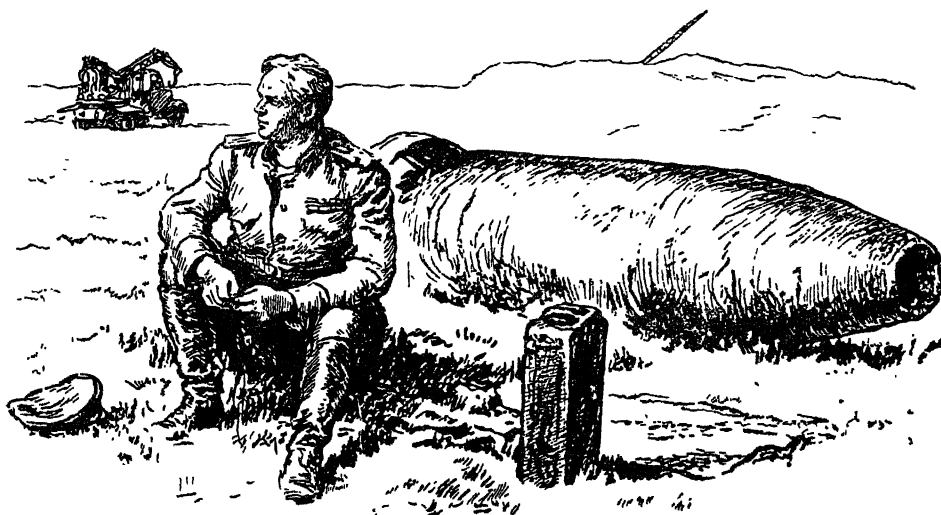
"A nice little thing we dug up this time, eh?" joked the colonel.

The driver made no reply. His face had taken on an earthen hue and large drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead. But he drove quite steadily.

The lorry climbed slowly out of the pit on to the road, then struck out over the steppe. When the gully was completely hidden from view by the hill, the colonel told the driver to stop and to lower the torpedo to the ground. By now it had dried completely and had turned a violent rusty red. The lorry drove off. The men, with an alacrity the colonel could not help noticing, hurried off to get their tools. The colonel sat down on the dry, greyish grass. Suddenly someone right behind him, as if resuming a conversation recently broken off, remarked:

"Yes, but why the hell didn't it go off?"

The colonel turned to see Volnukhin standing there, seemingly engrossed in the act of wiping the grease off his fingers with bits of waste. This question coming from the man who had narrowly escaped being blown to pieces by the bomb gave the colonel the familiar chilly, prickly sensation



he had known at the front when crawling with his sappers at night over enemy mine fields.

"We'll soon find out," he replied. "I'm going to take the thing apart myself." Having said this he was conscious of a sense of tremendous relief. "Now suppose you get away from here while the going's good," he added. "Why take unnecessary risks?"

When Volnukhin had disappeared behind the bluff, the colonel calmly studied the bomb. The years it had lain in the ground had covered it with a layer of rust so thick as to hide all sign of the joints and seams which could give the trained eye some clue to its construction. It was even difficult to tell what type of detonator it had or whether it had any emergency detonator with which the fascists had sought to protect their more carefully guarded models of missiles in the event of their falling into enemy hands.

The logical thing to do under the circumstances was to explode the missile, as was usually done with marine mines recovered by minesweepers or washed ashore by the tide. But this time the colonel acted in defiance of logic. When a lorry had brought up a set of tools, he sent everybody farther back and remained alone with his lethal riddle.

He was well aware of the danger, and like all old soldiers he did not think of death. But somehow the day, an ordinary windy day in the steppe, seemed unusually bright and lovely, the scent of the wormwood inexpressibly sweet, and the breeze blowing from the river so extraordinarily gentle and caressing that the burly middle-aged man felt an irresistible desire, as in his boyhood, to fill his lungs with this delicious air, to lift his face to the sun, and feast his eyes on the sparkling river, with its green island and the shimmering haze on the horizon.

Suppressing all such desires, the colonel removed his tunic, rolled up his shirt sleeves and set to work. He poured kerosene over the steel shell of the projectile, took a rag and proceeded to clean off the layer of rust. It was by no means easy work, but being purely mechanical, it took his mind off the danger. As he worked, he reflected on the queer tricks life played: the war had been over for many years, so many in fact that the

dug-outs in the gullies had crumbled to pieces, the trenches were overgrown with grass and the fighting men had long grown accustomed to their peacetime occupations—and here was he, Colonel Sokolov, who ought strictly speaking to have retired long ago, still fighting the war, tracking down death lying in wait in the steppe.

He thought of all those unexploded bombs, shells and mines which his sappers had extracted in these past years. Some of them, in place of explosives, had contained sand, slag or black foundry earth. The sappers liked such finds. They called them "smiles of friendship," and kept them in a special shed in the hope of one day turning them over to a military museum.

These "smiles," as the factory markings had shown, usually originated at munitions plants in Czechoslovakia, Poland, France and Belgium. But why had this monster not exploded? Now plainly visible on one of its flanks was the spread-eagle and swastika emblem and an anchor—the trade mark of a well-known Nazi naval arsenal which the sappers had come across quite frequently when cleaning out the river bed. The Nazis would hardly have risked employing slave labour from other lands in a plant of this kind. There was no doubt that the men who assembled and inspected these huge, and perhaps unique missiles, had been carefully screened.

Now that the rust had been removed, the colonel once more scrutinized the bluish steel surface, trying to guess at the design by the seams and joints. It did not resemble any of the missiles his sappers had come across hitherto. That meant that the emergency detonator with which it might be equipped must also be of an unusual design. How did it work? Where did the danger lurk? It was impossible to guess. One could only assume that the emergency detonator was connected with the main detonator and hence the bomb could not be made harmless in the ordinary way.

The colonel decided to cut open the shell around the middle. That too was dangerous, but less so. He took the risk of asking for volunteers to help him with the work, and once again the two veterans came forward. They sawed all day long and they sawed after dark, pausing now and again for a brief rest, a smoke and a bite to eat, and then resuming their work. The colonel never left their side. He lay on the ground chewing a blade of grass, watching the movement of the hacksaw and the fine spray of silvery filings that fell on the dry wormwood now on one side of the torpedo, now on the other.

And as during the war, in the heat of battle, the two old soldiers toiled on, heedless of time, oblivious of all but the scraping of the steel under the blade of the saw. It was almost daybreak when the colonel threw aside the grass he had been chewing and raised his hand.

"Stop," he said with unnatural calm.

And with the same unnatural calm the two sappers straightened their backs and wiped their perspiring foreheads with the backs of their hands.

The cut had almost encircled the torpedo, there was only a little bit more to go. The colonel told the sappers to support the two ends so as to prevent them from rolling apart and exploding the charge, and himself set to work with the hacksaw. At any moment, there might be an explosion. A terrific explosion that would convulse the earth as far as the eye could see. True, he and his companions would not hear it. Taking a firmer grip on the hacksaw, he made another incision and still another. Through the sound of the saw blade cutting into the metal the hoarse breathing of the three men could be heard.

Somewhere far away, most likely in the construction camp, in the distance, an accordion was playing, and from still farther away came the barely audible blasts of ships' sirens muffled by the miles in between. In the near-by gully, now bathed in the white glare of floodlights, work went on as usual, judging by the rhythmic succession of the metallic grinding of the excavator scoop gnawing into the earth, the creaking of the jib and the dull thuds of heavy earth falling into the lorries. And the grasshoppers strummed incessantly as if intoxicated by the pungent odours of the steppe refreshed by the mists that precede daybreak.

Feeling his arms grow numb, the colonel fought the torpor coming over him, and he plied the hacksaw with redoubled rigour. Suddenly a tremor passed through the steel shell as if he had touched some vital chord. All three of the men gasped.

But nothing happened. The two halves of the shell had separated, and now they had to be moved apart with utmost caution. How much time it took neither the colonel nor the two sappers knew—time had ceased to exist for them.

This too was done and still there was no explosion. The destructive power pent up in it had been curbed. The secrets of the bomb mechanism were theirs for the taking. And when the first orange banners of the rising sun lit up the steppe, the components of the engine of death lay dismantled on tarpaulins.

Why hadn't the torpedo exploded? The detonator was simple enough. Nothing new about the design. Wherein lay the mystery?

The colonel reached out for a pair of calipers and his nostrils distended like a hunter's who has just caught his quarry in the sights of his gun. Perhaps the parts of the mechanism had not turned out just so; perhaps the assembly workers who had put them together had missed up on something. No, everything was precisely as it should have been. What was the explanation of the riddle?

"You ought to rest for a while, Comrade Colonel," said one of the sappers, while he himself worked as if in a frenzy, checking, measuring, fitting together the various parts.

"That's right," said the other. "A good sleep is what you need after what we've been through. I'm still shaking like a jelly!" But he too went on examining the torpedo parts.

Give up before the solution was found? No, never! The colonel turned back once more to study parts he had gone over time and again before.

Suddenly he heard an excited cry next to him.

"Look at this, Comrade Colonel!" One of the sappers was holding out to him a piece of carton the size of half a playing card, all smeared with grease and rust.

Reluctantly the colonel tore his eyes away from the parts before him. There was nothing remarkable about the piece of carton. Just ordinary pasteboard, with something printed on it in German—technical specifications, nothing more. Probably stuffed in to take up some unnecessary play somewhere.

"The other side, look at the other side," said the sapper. "There's something written there."

The colonel turned the square of cardboard around. A few words had been scribbled in blue pencil, hurriedly, but legibly enough. He read:

"Nicht alle Deutschen sind Nazi."

"Another 'Smile of Friendship'?" the sappers asked in chorus.

The colonel nodded and slipped the piece of cardboard in his pocketbook. Getting up, he felt faint from hunger and exhaustion, and barely dragging his feet over the ground, he slowly made his way to the hillside where a group of men were waiting, among them Volnukhin, the one-armed engineer and the little watchman.

"Well, what did you find?" The group closed in around him.

Unhurriedly the colonel pulled out his pocketbook, took out the bit of pasteboard, and translated the message it bore:

"'Not all Germans are Nazis.' Found it inside."

"But what did they do to make it a dud?" someone asked.

"On that score one guess is as good as another."

The bit of pasteboard passed from hand to hand. The men handled it reverently, and each gazed at it for a long time, although none of them knew a word of German. In the meantime the colonel had put on his tunic and was surprised to see how big it had become for him. It had been a perfect fit, but now it hung on him in loose folds, and the collar was by far too big for his neck.

And only now it dawned on Colonel Sokolov what it had cost him to fathom the secret of the unexploded torpedo, what price he had paid for that tiny bit of pasteboard. But he had no regrets.

Translated by Rose Prokofieva



Another Road

IT IS hot. The collective-farm market, a swirling mass of colour, hums like an upturned beehive. Earth-burnished cartwheels and the metal churns on the carts gleam fiercely in the sunshine.

Vasili Koshelev, book-keeper at the district leather-trading office, is making his way across the market square.

He is wearing a nondescript jacket over a dirty undervest, his cheeks are covered with thick, prickly stubble, and only his picturesquely bushy moustache looks normally tidy.

To Vasili it seems that the market square today is for some reason scored with ruts and pot-holes. He stumbles frequently, but that does not lessen his determination. He pushes people aside, squeezes past the hot muzzles of horses, strides over baskets of vegetables and, muttering something under his breath, goes on and on.

Vasili knows where Marina is to be found—in the milk row, not far from the town scales. He appears in front of her unexpectedly, pushes her customers aside and looks at her with angry, bloodshot eyes.

"Marina! . . . I demand the children! Give me the children, Marina!"

The woman starts, and a frown crosses her face, then she stares at her husband with feigned astonishment. She is not yet old. But her rather long, deeply sunburned face looks tired, her lips are pallid, and there is a fine network of wrinkles under her eyes. She utters a short laugh.

"So you've turned up! . . . And I was beginning to think you wouldn't come and see me today. You might at least say 'hello.' Am I your wife or what?" And she resumes the lengthy task of wiping her hands on her apron.

"Don't talk to me like that!" Vasili snaps furiously. "I can complain to the court. If you don't want to live with me, you needn't—that's your own business. But the children belong to both of us. . . . The court will share things out; they know the law!" Vasili bangs the wheel of Marina's cart with his fist, and his voice becomes a shout: "I'm putting it to you fair, Marina! . . . Give me the children! . . ."

His shouting attracts the collective farmers on the near-by carts; they poke their heads forward and exchange glances.

Marina begins to feel embarrassed. She blushes hotly and pulls her husband's arm:

"Leave me alone, Vasili. . . . You're drunk. I'll come round and see you after market. We'll talk things over, if you like."

"Yes, I am drunk. . . . And why? I'm desperate for the children!"

Marina takes her husband by the shoulders and tries to push him into the stream of people passing the cart.

"Go on. . . . For goodness sake!"

Vasili shakes himself free, waves his arms and, swaying suddenly, knocks over a pot of cream on the cart. The cream flows over the cart and drips lazily to the ground. A crowd gathers. Vasili recognizes the familiar faces of collective farmers from Beryozovka. There is little, sharp-eyed Afanasi Zaitsev, the stableman, Marina's neighbour. He has just had a haircut and shave and the air round him reeks of eau-de-Cologne. Afanasi raises his new canvas cap and gives Vasili a friendly wink:

"Hello, Vasili! Well, how are the accounts going? What's the debit and credit? They say you've taken a liking to the town, not missing us collective farmers much, eh?"

More and more people gather round.

An old woman with grey hair on her upper lip—Vasili does not even know her name—shakes her head deprecatingly and mutters:

"Oh, Vasili, Vasili! You have gone astray, you bad man. Fancy leaving your children! Shame on you!"

Konkov the smith, tall and with a flowing mane of hair, his sleeves rolled up to the elbow and his wrists spattered with blood—he has just been chopping meat—pushes his way through the crowd.

"Don't try scaring our Marina. The whole collective farm is out today," he says, pointing to the crowd. "We'll stand up for her. And you tell your husband, Marina, it's no good him making a fuss. The law's on your side. . . ."

Marina, her eyes lowered, says nothing, and with a chip of wood scrapes the spilt cream off the cart.

Vasili rummages confusedly in his pockets, swallows hard and, turning his back on his wife, strides away.

The crowd parts to let him through.

"Hi, book-keeper! You've forgotten to buy your kopeck's worth of onions!" someone shouts after him, laughing.

A week passed and Vasili could stand it no longer. He bought some presents and set out for the country. "I'll talk to the children myself," he decided. "They'll understand me."

Several stops down the line, Vasili got out at a little wayside station and struck off along a straight road between fields of rye to Beryozovka.

The grain was not yet ripe. Greyish-green waves rippled across the field. A jagged wall of fir-trees loomed deep blue on the horizon. Across the river the collective-farm women were haymaking.

Presently Beryozovka appeared. For a minute Vasili stood on the fringe of the village, then turned towards the private plots. He approached his house by the back way.

A spindly-legged red calf was nibbling the grass indifferently on the edge of the allotment. Several long balks of timber, their freshness already dulled, lay in the sideway.

"Looks as if I'll have to sell them. This is no time for building," thought Vasili.

The door leading into the house was padlocked. Vasili's spirits rose; Marina must be out haymaking, and only the two youngsters, Kolka and Masha, would be at home. It would not be hard to talk them round. . . .

Vasili walked down to the river, expecting to find Kolka there.

In the middle of the river, the village boys were fighting a battle for a log raft.

Stepping carefully between the piles of clothes strewn about the bank, Vasili went down to the water's edge. For some time he gazed at the boys' bare bodies without being able to recognize which of them was his Kolka.

At last someone noticed Vasili and shouted:

"Kolka! . . . Book-keeper! . . . Your father's here! . . ."

The boys turned away from the raft and swam to the bank.

Kolka, a snub-nosed, freckled lad with a sharp chin, blue with cold after being in the water so long, pushed his legs hurriedly into his trousers and was the first to run up to his father.

"Mum's not here. . . . She's gone off to the far meadow. We haven't got a man in the family, so she's doing the mowing. . . . There's only me and Masha at home. . . ."

Kolka was obviously embarrassed. He kept glancing at the other boys, and as he spoke, quickly and jerkily, his left hand twisted in the sleeve of his blue shirt. One after the other the boys hopped out of the water and, pulling their clothes on as they ran, surrounded Vasili, surveying him intently.

"Mum won't be home tomorrow or the day after. . . . She's gone away for a whole week. . . ." Kolka announced. "What are you going to do: wait for her or go back?"

Vasili stroked his beautiful moustache and grinned amiably.

"We'll manage without Mum. I came to see you and Masha. I want you to come and see me."

"To come and see you?" said Kolka in surprise.

"That's right. . . . We'll take a look round the town and I'll show you the park. There's a place I know there—it's amazing—makes you laugh fit to die. . . ."

"I've been there," one of the boys, Ilyusha Shabrov, affirmed. "There's one mirror there that makes you little, and another one that makes you ever so big."

"That's it," Vasili nodded, smiling. "And perhaps we'll go and see Ivan the Terrible, eh, Kolka?"

"Ivan the Terrible?" Kolka repeated inquiringly.

"Don't you remember what I told you about the tsar that lived in our town? A real tsar he was, with a temper. If you didn't act just so—off with your head! We'll go to the museum together, and they'll show us everything—the hat that terrible Ivan used to wear, and what plate he ate his porridge out of. . . ."

"I don't know anything about that," said Ilyusha with a sigh. "I've never been to the museum."

Then Kolka's father promised to take him to the cinema and the theatre, and for a row on the lake.

Kolka rubbed the tip of his nose. The temptation was great. He had only been to town twice, and even then he had not seen anything except the market square. And suddenly here was such a tempting invitation! . . .

But from whom?

Kolka remembered what the boys said about their fathers. Ilyusha Shabrov's was, perhaps, the most famous. During the war he had been a

partisan, going into the enemy's rear and blowing up their trains. And now he was working as a team-leader at the collective farm.

Lyonka Zaitsev had a tough father too. In the days of collectivization the kulaks had fired at him with shot-guns and set their dogs on him. He still had a limp, but when there had been a fire at the farm, Lyonka's father had been the first to dash into the burning stables, and had saved a thoroughbred stallion.

Kolka used to envy the other lads; his father seemed to be just a nobody, sitting all day in the office, clicking an abacus. Kolka had often questioned his mother whether the kulaks had ever set their dogs on Father, or blazed away at him with their shot-guns.

His questions had surprised Marina.

"No, they didn't, thank the Lord," she would say and answer all his questions briefly and rather unwillingly. Father was like most other fathers, he hadn't had anything to do with the kulaks, he had joined the collective farm with everyone else. He didn't go to the war because of his health.

One day the boys decided to decorate a corner of the schoolroom with the names of the famous people of the collective farm. They pasted up photographs of team-leaders, stock-breeders, stablemen. Then, one day, a picture of Vasili Koshelev appeared on the wall.

"What's he there for?" Kolka exclaimed.

"He adds things up well," Ilyusha Shabrov explained. "Everyone's pleased with him. . . . D'ye think it's just a matter of clicking those abacus beads all the time?"

After that Kolka started calling in at the management office more often. He would sit down by the table and watch his father flicking the beads to and fro.

There were always a number of collective farmers in the management office. They watched respectfully as Vasili worked. Kolka liked that. He began to regard his father with respect too. In short, life took a turn for the better. The farmers would shake hands with Kolka when they met him, and ask:

"Well, young book-keeper, how are our work-day units getting on up there? Got'em totted up?"

And Kolka would proudly announce the figures. He could remember by heart how much work each member of the farm had to his credit. And soon he stood as high as Ilyusha Shabrov, the team-leader's son.

Then suddenly, in the middle of winter, Kolka's father went away to the town.

Under Father's picture at school someone's mischievous hand printed in small letters: "Runaway."

Kolka rubbed out the word with his finger. The next day the inscription appeared again. Then Kolka secretly tore down the photograph of his father, took it home and hid it in a little box.

Presently a caricature appeared in the farm's wall newspaper. It was of a man with a bushy moustache and a humped back running off to town, dragging behind him, like a pram, an abacus, on which sat Kolka, his mother and sister.

Choking with tears, Kolka ran to his mother and asked when Father would be back.

"Who knows!" Marina answered, avoiding her son's glance. "He's not well. He's gone to get some treatment."

Father returned late one evening about three weeks afterwards, and that night, when they were all in bed, Kolka heard his father whispering fiercely to Mother.

"But I'm afraid, Vasili! I've been living here for thirty-five years," came his mother's frightened whisper. "And suddenly you want me to chuck up everything. . . . Why, it'll make me ill, Vasili!"

"You're a fool, woman," Vasili hissed indignantly. "Try and understand, can't you? What's the use of us being tied up with this farm? Every year we have a new chairman . . . there's not enough horses. You get next to nothing for a work-day unit. Why, there isn't a poorer farm than ours in the whole district. . . ."

"That's true," Marina said with a sigh. "But all the same, I'd be ashamed to run away like that, without a word to anyone. Perhaps things'll come right in time, Vasili. . . ."

Early in the morning Vasili again went off to town.

He came home like that, at night, several times. When Marina and Kolka came to town for market, Vasili would ask them round to his lodgings, boast of his new job, and urge them to hurry up with the moving.

But Marina was in no hurry. Spring was near; the farm women were working on the seed-frames, and Marina was busy too.

Nowadays Kolka hardly ever looked in at the management office; his father's place there had been taken by a new man.

When they met Kolka, the collective farmers would call him "book-keeper," as of old, but now the title only hurt the boy.

A cold dislike of his father grew in Kolka's heart.

And now he did not know what to do. Kolka glanced inquiringly at the other boys.

"Think, Kolka, think," his father urged him. "If you don't want to come to town, you needn't. . . . Your mind's your own. I can take Masha alone. But open the house and give me something to eat, will you?"

Kolka took his father home, put a pan of potatoes and a jug of milk on the table, and ran outside again to the other boys.

"Tell me straight, should I go or shouldn't I? You know yourselves what my father's like. . . ."

The boys' opinions varied.

Some said Kolka should not go; it would be better to wait until the school excursion next year, and in any case Kolka ought not to talk to a father like Vasili. Others maintained that Kolka's father did not come into this at all; the main thing was to get to town, see the "hall of mirrors" and the museum where Ivan the Terrible's hat was. . . .

"Well, I wouldn't go just for the sake of a hat," said Ilyusha Shabrov.

"What about the cinema? And the roundabout at the market? And the theatre?" Lyonka Zaitsev, a great film fan, argued hotly in favour of Kolka's making the trip. And he advised Kolka to see at least two films every evening and remember them well, so that when he came back he could tell the boys all about them.

After some argument, the boys finally agreed that there was no harm in Kolka's going to town for three or four days. After loading him with all kinds of advice, they left him.

Kolka returned to his father.

"All right then," he said. "I can go for about three days. The calf's ill, though; it doesn't moo and it won't eat anything."

But Vasili had an answer to that too; he would ask their neighbour, and she would keep an eye on the sick calf.

Kolka put on his new boots and an old militiaman's cap, which had a violet star drawn above the peak in coloured crayon.

The cap was one of Kolka's proudest possessions. When he was wearing it, he felt himself more important and impressive, and, what was more, he thought that in that cap no one would dare to call him a book-keeper.

Seven-year-old Masha, a little flaxen-haired girl with big wondering eyes, did not take much persuading.

Upon receiving her father's present—two bright silk ribbons—and learning that he wanted Kolka and her to come away with him, Masha jumped for joy. The only thing that worried her was whether Nadya, a big rag doll, could come too. Father allowed her to take Nadya.

Of the Koshelev family it was Masha, perhaps, who had most respect for her father. To her it seemed that Daddy had been misjudged in some way; she was secretly sorry for him, and on the few occasions when Vasili came to the village she would make a fuss of him, confiding to him her little childish secrets and grudges against Kolka and her mother. And on days when a vague sadness touched her young heart, Masha would go out on to the highroad and, pressing her ear to a telegraph pole, listen to the grumpy twanging of the wires and stare seriously into the button eyes of her doll, and say: "Won't you run to town, Nadya. Your feet are young and light."

After dinner, Vasili and the children set out for the station. Before leaving, Kolka wrote to his mother on a scrap of paper that he and Masha had gone away to visit Father.

Vasili read the message, sniggered, and added a postscript:

"Marina! The children have come away with me." The "with me" was heavily underlined. "Make your choice. Either you can live alone, without the children, or come and live with us in town.

Vasili."

It was late evening when the Koshelevs arrived in town.

At home they were greeted by Vasili's landlady, who was very stout and extremely inquisitive. She had a habit of circling round a person, never taking her eyes off him.

"Welcome home with your family, Vasili Ivanovich," the landlady greeted Vasili, and gave Masha's cheek a friendly pinch. "Not long now before your better half comes too, I expect?"

"No, I don't think it'll be long," Vasili replied.

He gave Kolka and Masha the bed to sleep in, and himself slept on the floor. It was a double bed, very high, and on casters. The tender-hearted landlady had conceded it to Vasili on the day he had taken over the room: "Make yourself comfortable, dearie. It's a cheery old bed."

And indeed it was. At the slightest touch the loosely-screwed nickel tubes and nobs rang like the bells on a tambourine.

In the morning, Vasili got up early, dressed hurriedly, and was just about to pick up his battered canvas satchel when he noticed Kolka's sharp, suspicious glance fixed upon him.

"When are we going to see Ivan the Terrible?"

"There's plenty of time. You go to sleep, have a rest—everyone sleeps a lot when they're guests."

And Father went off to work.

On the first day Kolka showed Masha every sight in the town that he knew—the big market weights, the swings, the ice-cream seller's cart. Farther than the market, however, he decided not to venture; the town boys seemed to be in a very warlike mood. Even Kolka's militia cap made no impression on them.

In the yard Kolka got to know the landlady's son, and even began to help him paint his rabbit hatch. But the plump, dimple-cheeked Vitka turned round clumsily and upset his pot of paint, whereupon he shouted crossly at Kolka:

"All because of you, farmer!"

Kolka smeared Vitka's cheek with paint and ran away into the room.

There was no fun in life. Evening would not come. In town even the sun seemed to loiter about with nothing to do.

Father came home late and started cooking dinner on a kerosene stove in the passage.

Kolka reminded him about the cinema.

"We'll go tomorrow," his father replied. "Your precious cinema won't run away."

The next day and the day after were the same; Father came home late from the office and, excusing himself on the ground that he was tired, promised to make up for everything on his day-off.

Kolka began to look glum.

Only Masha was pleased with town life.

Everything here was to her liking: her new friends in the yard who had taught her to play "houses" and to skip, the streets crowded with people and carts, and even Daddy's high, noisy bed.

The first day she arrived in town, Masha drew a black stroke on the wall in the corner of the room.

"That's a work-day unit," she explained to her father. "Whose is it? Not mine, of course. I'm only a little girl—I don't get work-day units. And you are grown-up, but you don't belong to the farm any more. So you don't get any either. It's Mummy's work-day unit. I always kept count of them on the wall at home, and I will here too. . . ."

Vasili laughed, but said nothing.

He was expecting Marina any day. She would come into the room and at first, of course, she would argue and make a fuss, but then she would see how Kolka and Masha had got used to living here, and she would have to give in.

In the mornings Vasili would go to the market or to the level crossing, where the collective farmers from Beryozovka usually came into town, and stand there for a long time watching the heavily-laden carts creaking past. But Marina did not come.

"You can't fool me, I know you'll come!" Vasili thought in annoyance. "I've got the children, you can't live without them; they'll draw you. . . ."

One morning Kolka was awakened by the cheerful clanging and twanging of the bed springs.

Masha, clasping her doll, was bouncing up and down on the bed: "Gee-up, my beauties!" She must have thought she and Nadya were dashing along in a speedy troika with jingling bells.

Kolka pushed his sister wrathfully out of bed.

"Shoo! . . . What are you doing in this house anyway?"

"That's a fine question!" Masha replied indignantly. "We're on a holiday."

"Your holiday's going to be a flop," Kolka retorted. "You don't understand, kid. . . . Dad's been fooling us. He promised to show us everything, and that's as far as he got. . . ."

"He will show us. . . . You just wait a bit."

"I've no time to wait. It's time I went home. . . . We've wasted four days already."

The landlady looked round the door and told the children that their father had left breakfast for them.

Masha went out into the passage to wash.

The landlady gave the little girl a sweet in silver paper and stroked her flaxen hair.

"Well, Goldylocks, isn't your Mummy coming?"

"Mummy's busy. . . . She's mowing the hay. . . . She can't go visiting," Masha replied, pressing the silver paper on her teeth.

"And which Daddy do you like best, Goldylocks: Vasili Ivanovich or the one back in the village. I expect that one's young and handsome, eh?"

"What one?" Masha asked, looking up in wonder. "We've only got one Daddy—Vasili Ivanovich."

"But the other Daddy gives Mother money, doesn't he? To buy presents and dresses for you?" the landlady went on persistently.

Masha blushed, dropped the silver paper and ran away into the room.

"What's she keep asking me about another Daddy for?" Masha complained to her brother. "We've only got one. . . . Everybody knows that. You tell her, Kolka. . . . Only he's ill. . . . he has to live in town."

"He's ill all right, but not the way you think," Kolka said with a bitter grin, and fell deep in thought.

That evening he announced firmly to his father that it was time he went home; the village boys would already be going to the woods for mushrooms, and he did not want to hang about in town any longer.

His father frowned.

"Isn't this a home? Live here, get used to it. . . . Mother will be coming soon."

"She won't come. . . . it's no good your waiting," the boy blurted out.

"Hold your tongue! You're beginning to think yourself a bit too clever!" his father shouted and, glancing at Masha, told her to go to bed.

In the morning Kolka found his boots missing from under the bed. Then he discovered that his jacket had been hidden too. Only the militia cap was hanging in its place on the wall.

Kolka clenched his fists.

Now everything was clear to him. Father had asked Masha and him to come to town not because he wanted to give them a treat, but to force their mother to come and live in town. And now he and Masha were being kept here like prisoners!

Kolka thought of his mother. Suppose she suddenly got tired of living without the children and decided to come and live with Father? . . . She would load her things on the cart, board up the windows, fasten the padlock on the door. Perhaps she was even now saying good-bye to the neighbours. . . .

Kolka shuddered at the thought. No, he must go back at once to the village and warn his mother!

Kolka peeped into the cupboard where Father kept his money. The money was not there—Father must have hidden that away too.

"Let him keep it," Kolka decided. "I'll get home on foot anyway. . . . I'll follow the telegraph poles."

And he started stuffing his pockets with bits of bread.

Masha began to whimper; she, too, wanted to go home.

Kolka promised that on the very first market day he and Mother would come to town and take her home with them.

"But you won't!" said his sister miserably.

"I promise. May I drop dead if I don't!" Kolka vowed. "I'll get you out of here!"

With difficulty Masha was persuaded to stay.

Father came home in the evening, and on learning that Kolka had gone home got very angry and waved his finger threateningly at his daughter.

The next day he took Masha to the office, sat her down beside him, and gave her a sheet of paper and a red-and-blue pencil.

"Draw something. . . ."

"What for?" said Masha in surprise. "I want to go home. It's dull with you."

But her father's moustache twitched so angrily that Masha said no more.

Meekly she drew houses, fish, flowers, and her doll Nadya. Tears dripped on the paper and she coloured them with purple ink.

And so it went on day after day. Masha sat in the office beside her father, listening anxiously every time there was a knock at the door; surely that must be Kolka and Mummy who had come to take her home.

But no one came from the farm.

Masha could not sleep at night and, wrapping her doll in the blanket, she would cry bitterly.

"Oh, we are poor things. . . . Everyone's forgotten us. . . ."

Vasili kept telling Masha he was very fond of her, promised to buy her toys, made up all kinds of interesting stories, remembered forgotten fairy-tales.

Of a morning he would hurry off to the market almost before it was light, buy food, and make breakfast at home on the kerosene stove. But he was a man and nothing turned out properly; he dropped the frying pan, the fish got burnt, the milk boiled over, the kerosene stove played tricks on him,



The landlady, pink and warm after a good night's rest, would put her head round the door and wag it despairingly:

"Oh, Vasili Ivanovich, Vasili Ivanovich! And still your better half doesn't come. What can she be thinking of! I just can't understand it. . . ." And she would sigh and stare at the floor.

"Oh, hell!" Vasili ground out between his teeth. "She must come!" But still there was no sign of Marina.

One Sunday, when Vasili had gone to have a bath and Masha was sitting alone in the room, Kolka arrived.

Holding a heavy wicker basket covered with sacking in one hand, and a can of milk in the other, he squeezed in through the door.

Masha rushed forward to greet her brother.

"Have you come for me? You have, haven't you? Why were you so long?" And she started wrapping her things in a bundle.

"Wait a minute," said Kolka, wiping his perspiring face. "You'll have to stay in town a bit longer. . . ."

Masha did not understand and he had to explain.

At the collective farm, team-leader Grigori Shabrov had fallen ill, and it looked as if he would be ill for a long time. Their mother had been appointed team-leader in his place. And now the harvest had begun, Mother was out in the fields for days on end. So she had decided that Masha should stay with Father in town until harvest-time was over.

The little girl blinked in dismay.

"I want to go with you. . . ."

"You can't come with me. . . . I'm going to help with the harvest too. . . . I'll be carting water," Kolka replied, and gave his sister strict instructions from Mother; she must obey Father, and keep herself clean, and not be a naughty girl or cry.

Masha sniffed miserably.

"And you said you'd get me out of here! . . ."

"I would have done. . . . It was Mum wanted you to stay with Father. . . . Now what is it, Masha, what is it? We'll come for you. . . . Mum will come too. . . . In about three weeks. . . . You wait for us. . . . And this is food for you. . . ."

Untying the basket, Kolka began to take out of it eggs, butter, meat and pies.

After staying a little while longer and telling her the news of the farm, he hurried away, so as not to miss a cart from the market to take him home; and besides he was not very anxious to see his father.

When Vasili returned after his bath, he found his daughter in tears. From her muddled story he gathered that Marina had sent them food, and that she herself was very busy and could not come to town.

"What, is she trying to make a fool of me!" Vasili muttered angrily. "She doesn't come herself and leaves me to play nursemaid to the girl!"

In the morning he again had to take Masha to work with him.

At the office everyone had got used to Masha and would send her on errands to the canteen. Masha even made friends there. The chief book-keeper, who had an enormous gold tooth and was just as blonde as Masha herself, gave her a box of coloured pencils.

"Draw me the most interesting thing you can think of, Masha."

Masha thought a bit, sucked her pencil and covered the whole sheet of

paper with a lop-sided drawing of a house. Blue wild flowers grew out of the window-sills, the chimney looked like an old mushroom, and the smoke curled out of it like a bed-spring.

"Oh, I've seen that one already," said the book-keeper disappointedly. "You've already drawn houses like that all over my table."

"But this is our house, and those others don't belong to anyone!" Masha defended her drawing hotly. "We're going to build it this autumn. The cottage we live in now is old and little. But in the new house we'll make six windows. It'll be a lovely house. . . . You come and see. Will you?"

"All right, I'll come," the chief book-keeper promised, and he turned to Masha's father: "What's this, Vasili Ivanovich? Your wife in the country is going to build a new house, and you don't tell us anything about it?"

Vasili waved his hand scornfully:

"That girl will tell you anything. . . . What does she know about it! My wife hasn't got the money to do that."

"But I do know," Masha argued. "Kolka told me. . . . Mummy's going to build that house. She's a team-leader now. . . ."

Vasili shook his head—his daughter was turning into a story-teller. It must be for want of anything better to do.

A week later, Konkov, the Beryozovka smith, called at Vasili's lodgings, handed him a basket of provision, and asked how Masha was getting on.

"What's this? Does Marina think she can buy me off with food?" Vasili exploded.

"She would have come to see the little girl herself," the smith explained. "But you know what it is when the work's in full swing. And your wife's a team-leader now. . . ."

"A team-leader?!"

"Yes, that's it. Marina manages things well, the people take notice of her. And things are looking up all round at the farm these days. We've elected a new chairman, an agronomist. People are getting keen on the land. We're making a bit of an income now. . . ." Konkov eyed Vasili keenly and shook his head. "You backed the wrong horse, I think, Vasili Ivanovich. You shouldn't have left us."

Vasili averted his eyes.

"My health's not up to much. . . . you know that. . . ."

Konkov left the basket of food and went away, but Vasili sat at the table for a long time, his head bowed.

Masha came up to the table and looked into her father's eyes. They were misty and sad. The little girl's heart tightened.

Clasping her father's warm hand, Masha started pleading with him to get well soon and go back home with her to Mother.

How lovely it would be at home! Daddy would go to work in the farm office again, clicking away on the abacus, and Masha would run in to tell him when dinner was ready, or to come and have tea. On holidays they would go to the cinema at the club. Masha would hold Daddy's hand. Mummy would walk along beside them in a fine new dress. And everyone would look at them and say: "Lucky Masha! Daddy on one side, Mummy on the other, and her right in the middle."

"We will go, Daddy, won't we?" Masha pleaded. "There's a doctor at the collective farm too. . . ."

Vasili said nothing and gently stroked the little girl's hair.

On market days Vasili was awakened by the cheerful rumble of wheels. He would go over to the window. A stream of carts was winding its way down the street. The carts were loaded with clean, smart tubs and pans, brownish-red glazed pots, pitchers with narrow necks, gleaming white shaft-bows, wheels and rakes. Behind them came more carts with cucumbers, pink-tinged potatoes, scarlet tomatoes, milk, butter and meat.

"What a lot they're bringing in!" Vasili muttered, and felt himself seized by a strange anxiety.

Some persistent force drew him to the market. He wandered about among the carts, asked the price of everything, bought nothing, and talked to the collective farmers about sowings, harvests, incomes, taking a special interest in the way the Beryozovka collective farm was progressing.

Sometimes Vasili would shake his head and irritably interrupt someone who seemed to him to be boasting out of all proportion:

"That's going a bit too far, my lad! Come on, tell me your debits and credits—I'll tot up that balance in a second."

The farmers would give him the figures, and Vasili would count them up quickly.

Sometimes he would be discovered at this occupation by his fellow-villagers, who would gather round and question him laughingly:

"What, Vasili Ivanovich, feeling lonely without the farm accounts?"

Vasili would frown and move away, although he desperately wanted to ask his fellow-villagers how Marina was getting on.

He had already begun to realize that it was useless to keep his daughter in town; that would not tempt Marina away from the village. And, besides, it was no easy task to look after the child, wash her, change her linen, keep an eye on the state of her shoes.

One day Masha fell ill with tonsillitis.

Vasili had to take her to the clinic, fetch medicine, and sit up at night.

After a week, Masha began to feel better, but, still enjoying the rights of a sick person, she demanded that her father should sit on the bed and tell her stories. And sometimes she was simply wilful, which made her father really angry.

"I'll send you back to Mother!" Vasili threatened one day. "She'll soon put you in order. Get your things together, I'll take you to the market and the village people will take you the rest of the way."

Masha looked confused and went away into the corner where she was marking her mother's work-day units on the wall.

"Now what's the matter? You were so anxious to go, making all that fuss, and now. . . ."

"I mustn't go away from here. . . ." Masha said quietly, drawing her finger over the work-day units and counting something under her breath. "I'll be living with you for another eight days."

"Why eight?" Vasili asked in surprise.

"That's what Mummy said . . . until the end of the harvest."

Marina kept her word—she came to town exactly at the end of the third week. The evening before, Masha had already packed up her things, and when she went to bed made a resolution to get up very early to meet her mother driving into town,

That night she kept getting out of bed and waking her father, but by the morning she was fast asleep and did not even hear Marina enter the room.

Vasili rose to meet his wife. They exchanged greetings.

Marina bent over her daughter and brushed a fly off the girl's face.

"Shall we wake her up?" Vasili asked.

"Let her sleep. I'll call in on the way back from market. Well? Been having a rough time with her?"

"Pretty rough sometimes. . . ."

"There isn't any nursery at the farm, and I had no time for Masha while the harvest was on. She'd have been a proper orphan but for you. Thanks for helping me out. . . ."

"Don't mention it," Vasili said with a short laugh. "You made a proper nursemaid of me." He was silent for a moment, then he said quietly: "Marina! Perhaps you'll stay?" And not believing himself in what he was saying: "We're not divorced you know. . . . Still wife and husband. Not even quarrelled. . . ."

Marina shook her head thoughtfully.

"No, we never quarrelled. . . . But why should I come to you? To cook and do the washing? And all I'll count for will be a book-keeper's wife. Not much to crow about in that. But on the farm I'm doing a real job. . . . No, Vasili Ivanovich, there's no sense in giving up a good thing once you've got it. . . . And don't ask me any more."

There was a long awkward silence. Marina glanced at the clock.

"I think I'll be going. Kolka's waiting for me on the cart." And she walked to the door.

"Wait!" Vasili stepped across her path and, twisting his moustache, asked in a dull weary voice: "Tell me, Marina. . . . Tell me straight. . . . Will they take me back? I'll say I'm sorry. . . . I'll work."

"I don't know," Marina answered uncertainly. "They might. . . . It'll be as the general meeting says. . . . They'll decide. We've already got another book-keeper, though."

"But you, Marina. . . . would you take me?"

"I. . . ." Marina faltered, "I've a woman's heart. . . . It doesn't think before it forgives. But here it's for the general meeting to decide. . . . And the main thing's the children. Kolka's just about gnashing his teeth. You've spoilt all his joy in life." She heaved a deep sigh. "Think it over yourself, Vasili. If you've got the strength, come back. . . ."

Vasili took a quick breath that made his moustache quiver and, hunching his shoulders, stepped away from the door.

Marina left.

Masha woke up about midday, made a fuss and demanded that her father take her to Mummy at once.

Vasili took his daughter to the market. But before he got to the milk row, he stopped. It was Sunday, and there would probably be a lot of Beryozovka people at market.

Vasili lifted Masha up and pointed her mother out to her. . . .

"There she is, in the green shawl. See her? Go to her. . . ."

"But what about you?"

"Oh, me. . . . I'll come on afterwards, dear. . . . I'll come by another road."

Translated by Robert English



Vadim
Kozhevnikov

Lenochka

"I'M GOING to die!" Lenochka said fiercely.

The nearest passer-by stopped in alarm. Lenochka turned away angrily, and walked on.

Manners be hanged, she felt pain, agonizing pain.

Unbuttoning her coat as she walked, she pushed her hand under the belt of her skirt and pressed her burning side as hard as she could.

That helped sometimes.

"You had better not put off the operation," the doctor had warned her.

But Lenochka had answered proudly: "Personal affairs must wait till I've taken my exams and am in the second year."

The attacks became frequent; she learned to overcome the pain in various ways.

It was a good thing to pinch your hand, and even better to start singing, or talking quickly, very quickly. . . .

She had felt bad as soon as she got up that morning. She need not have gone to Zykova for the lecture notes. And on top of all, that lout Kostya had said in front of everyone:

"What was the idea of going in to take your exam with a hot-water bottle under your arm—to make the professor sorry for you?"

"Physical training's the only subject you are good at, isn't it?" Lenochka had answered coldly, and turning away from Kostya so that he could see her only in profile, she had said to Zykova: "Some people's bodies seem to develop at the expense of their minds."

"And other people think that nothing else matters as long as they've got long eyelashes."

Lenochka was about to make a really cutting reply. And suddenly she felt the pain coming back. She dropped into a chair, concealed her hand under the tablecloth and started pinching it.

"What," Kostya gloated, "nothing to say?"

Lenochka accepted his challenge. She jumped up and went over to the mirror as if to put her hair straight. She wanted to sing loudly. He need not think he had succeeded in upsetting her.

A shivery, sick feeling rose in her throat. The surface of the mirror became liquid and Lenchka felt herself being sucked into its soft depths.

No one knew what an effort it cost her to drag herself out of that colourless vacuum.

She stood in the middle of the room, leaning on something horribly smooth.

"Don't imagine . . ." she muttered, looking at Kostya's scared face with hatred. "I dislike you intensely. . . . You are stupid and coarse, you don't understand anything."

In the passage she tried to take her coat down from the peg.

Standing there in the darkness, Kostya spoke in a strange voice: "Forgive me! Please, Lenchka!"

"Go away! And don't you dare follow me, or I don't know what I shall do!"

She ran downstairs and into the street; then she felt really bad. Oily rainbows floated before her eyes. . . .

"I'll fall," she thought. "No, not here. I'll get to the corner, then I'll lie down. Let them do what they like with me. Oh, Mother!"

"Hey! You've thrown your handbag away!"

"I didn't throw it away, I dropped it."

"I say, you're not well."

"Go away!" she said with loathing. "Go away!" And, doubling up, she walked on quicker.

If that happens again . . . I shan't reach home. I'll die in the street.

"Oh!" Lenchka gave a loud cry of pain and squatted on her heels. A car drew up, two wheels shaving the curb.

"Get in, comrade."

"Why can't you all leave me alone?" Lenchka asked plaintively. "I'll get there myself."

"Maternity home, eh?" the driver asked, looking round at her with a cheerful grin.

"You're all beasts, the lot of you!" And Lenchka began to cry. "I'm dying, and you keep making fun of me. I've got appendicitis! . . ."

She slipped off the seat on to the floor.

"Don't touch me! It . . . it doesn't hurt so much like this."

The car swayed, sending spasms of pain right through her body.

"I can't stand it!" she shouted, struggling, and bit someone's finger. Then she was on the floor of the car again.

Beside her there was a pair of strange feet in galoshes; she thought they might be cold, and pressed her face to them.

The car stopped.

"I won't be a moment," said a voice.

"Shut the door properly; she'll jump out," the driver advised.

"Has he gone?" Lenchka asked.

"He's coming back," said the driver and, leaning over the seat, patted Lenchka's shoulder. "You're a grand girl! Anyone else in your place would have screamed blue murder."

"Don't touch me! And I'm going to scream anyway. It's none of your business!"

"Go ahead," the driver assented. "I didn't mean anything."

Faces, all wearing the same expression of sympathy and curiosity, stared in through the windows on both sides of the car.

"What are they staring for? Aren't they ashamed? Why must they stare?" And Lenchka burst into sobs.

"Oh, you shouldn't do that," the driver said worriedly.

"Don't be angry with me. Please, I feel so awful."

"I've got the jitters myself, dear. Let me wipe your face."

"Please do," Lenchka said. "It's all wet."

Lenchka raised her head and, waiting for the gentle touch of a handkerchief, felt a delicious weariness envelop her whole body.

"Please do," she repeated in a low voice, closing her eyes.

A terrible searing shudder went through her again.

She rose sharply and hit her head on the soft top of the car. Darkness followed, with no pain. . . .

She opened her eyes in surprise. The face bending over her floated mistily in air.

Lenchka wanted to say loudly:

"Ring up Mother."

But instead she piped out weakly:

"Maa."

"Pretty as a kitten," said an unfamiliar voice.

Lenchka shut her eyes. She found the woman's face repelling. "Where did she come from?" Lenchka thought. And again she forced her eyes open.

"Hello," said the doctor, smiling.

Lenchka tried to raise herself, but the doctor checked her.

"Doctor! Please!" Lenchka gasped quickly. "Put me to sleep. I can't stand it, I'll die!"

"Haven't you had enough sleep yet? . . ." And the doctor spread his arms.

Lenchka looked at him angrily.

"If you don't give me an anaesthetic, I'll throw myself out of the window. I mean it!"

And she began to cry. Tears that were warm and pleasant flowed down her neck, tickling the skin. Lenchka was surprised that crying could be so pleasant, and tried to cry more.

"My dear girl! It's all over," said the doctor. "Put your tears in a cup and show them to your husband."

"What husband?" Lenchka said, wondering. "I have no husband! I'm unattached. . . ." And feeling a fool for having used such a stupid word, she hid her face in the pillow.

"Doctor!" exclaimed a cheerful voice from the next bed. "She was brought in by a stranger. We all talk silly under anaesthetic. What did Seryozha keep saying: 'Mum, where are my trousers?'"

"That was because he thought he was a little boy again," someone explained in a pleasant husky voice. "And you're always talking silly, Petukhova. Seryozha's a hero, and whenever you speak of him it should be with respect; he's injured both his legs."

"Fractured tibia," said Petukhova, "Don't interrupt. A person's only got to say 'Seryozha,' and you're jumping up as if you were on a spring; and that makes your temperature rise!"

"And as soon as you hear his 'tap, tap' you get all of a jitter and start putting on lipstick."

"Maybe I do," Petukhova assented. "You're lucky, your dressing gown suits you, but mine makes me look like a monkey. Doctor! Tell them to give me a blue one, like Egoshina's, or let me change with her; hers doesn't go with her complexion anyway, and, besides, she has to lie down all the time."

"This isn't a fashion show," said the doctor.

"Oh, Doctor!" Petukhova exclaimed. "I shan't ever forget how I held your hands and kept kissing them and saying: 'Doctor, I'm only nineteen, it isn't right for me to die!'"

"And I kept threatening that if I died you'd be put in prison," said the woman with the pleasant husky voice.

"Yes, I remember," said the doctor with a sigh.

"And how I showed you my photograph," said a woman whose face was beautiful but heavily marked with deep red scars. "Remember the way I shouted: 'Doctor! I used to be quite good-looking once.' And you looked at the photograph and said in that rough way: 'Be quiet! You'll be quite good-looking for a long time yet!'"

The doctor coughed and looked rather embarrassed.

Taking a mirror from her bed-table, the woman studied her face and asked worriedly:

"I think the redness will go if I have it massaged."

"Of course," said the doctor, "in time. And meanwhile you can put some powder on, if it's so essential. By the way, Petukhova, where do you get lipstick, and why do you use it here anyway?"

"She doesn't use lipstick. She does it with an indelible pencil."

The doctor looked at Petukhova in surprise.

Petukhova agreed meekly:

"I want to look nice. But don't worry, it's not that that gives me a temperature."

"Do you get out of bed?" the doctor asked severely.

"When I have to for my own needs," Petukhova muttered awkwardly.

"Her own needs always coincide with the tap of crutches in the corridor," remarked the woman with the scarred face.

"See that you have no more needs of that kind, Petukhova, or I'll transfer you to another ward."

"Oh, Doctor! . . ." Petukhova clasped her hands and gazed imploringly at the doctor.

The professor came in. When they stopped at the bed of the woman with the red-scarred face, the doctor stared at his feet indifferently while the professor talked. When they reached the bed of the woman with the pleasant husky voice, the doctor bit his lip anxiously, and the professor lowered his voice almost to a whisper. Then they went out. And the women began talking again.

Lenochka closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep.

"What a futile lot of women," she thought. "How dare they talk like that! If they knew what I went through, how terrible, how absolutely

terrible it was! But to be alive! It's so wonderful to be alive. And the university? Why, they just don't know how wonderful it is. . . ."

Petukhova was telling a story:

"There I was breathing for all I was worth, you know, and it just had no effect whatever. Doctor, I said, why do they put so little on the pad, tell them to put some more on. And Doctor came up and gave me such a bang on the head. Of course I went right off then, and don't remember any more."

"Don't make things up, Petukhova, the doctor couldn't have hit you!"

"Not with his fist, of course. With a kind of hammer, wrapped up in cotton wool; he has to do it a special way. I remember everything."

"Rubbish, Petukhova. Now, when I was on the table, I saw the doctor was getting nervous and, just imagine, he made the cut in the wrong place. I started shouting: 'Doctor! Not there! Not there! Doctor. . . .'"

"What kind of anaesthetic did you have?" Petukhova asked slyly.

"General."

"Well, you couldn't have seen anything. If it's a local, then you can talk to the doctor. Men prefer local anaesthetics; they enjoy seeing what their insides look like. But a woman always has the sense to faint if they won't give her a general anaesthetic."

"What about Lyulya?"

"Oh, she's a lieutenant. How can you compare! . . ."

Lenochka woke up in the night.

A white square of moonlight lay on the floor.

The lift hummed. A door banged. Padding footsteps sounded in the corridor. Something bulky was wheeled along on a stretcher with rubber tyres. Someone ran hurriedly down the corridor, and somewhere far away a cat started howling. "Who's tormenting the poor thing?" thought Lenochka. And suddenly she understood. . . .

The memory of pain shot through her body with real pain. She groaned, at first faintly, then louder. And soon she did not know whether she was really in pain, or not. She wanted to knock the tumbler off the bed-table, to wake someone up.

"Hurting, is it?" Lenochka heard Petukhova's voice.

Lenochka groaned again.

"Press the bell; the nurse will come and give you something."

"I don't want anything. It hurts!"

"Oh, so that's it. Give us your hand. . . . There! That's good!"

Afraid that Petukhova might fall asleep and take her hand away, Lenochka asked:

"What's your illness?"

"I'm not ill. It was the weather," Petukhova said sleepily. "We were out in the lorry, and there was a coat of ice on the road, terrible slippery it was. And suddenly some young devil popped up on the road with a sledge. Where he came from, I don't know. I stood on the brakes and the lorry skidded straight at him. This is going to be a nice mess, I thought, so I put the wheel over and went into a telegraph pole. . . ."

"And the boy?"

"I was so wild I ran after him to pull his ears, and then my arms wouldn't work; I felt all weak. 'Go and ring up the ambulance,' I said, 'or I'll give you a tanning.' I must have fallen down, and a crowd gathered, all excitement. And suddenly that kid slips in right between people's legs

and says: 'I've rung up the ambulance. Now you tell the militiaman.' 'Run away,' I says, 'or I'll pull your ears right off.' And he's in tears. 'Do what you like with me,' he says. Such a cheeky, obstinate little fellow he was. A queer lot some parents are! Why, if I had such a wonderful kid, I'd never let him out of my sight!"

Lenochka put her hand to her mouth and bit it, gasping for breath.

"What's the matter?" Petukhova asked anxiously.

Lenochka's throat was tight with pain and she could hardly speak.

"Forgive me!" she gasped. "I thought wrongly, of you, I am so ashamed."

"You heard that about Seryozha, did you?" asked Petukhova. "He's a steeple-jack, had an accident a little while ago. Handsome young man. But I'm not at all in love with him." Judging by the squeaking of the bed, Petukhova must have raised herself on her elbow. "It's boring here," she explained in a rapid whisper, "so I put up a little show of my own. Not all the women come out of here in proper shape, you know. They get down in the dumps. And I'm sort of proving to them that love can bloom under any circumstances. It's not the disablement a woman's afraid of; it's being left without love. Love isn't just a call of nature for women, it's something more. Seryozha's got one leg off at the knee, and the other just drags along. And I'm not all in one piece either. But I keep up with the smiles and notes. And everybody enjoys it."

"Does Seryozha love you?"

"Seryozha? Not a bit!" Petukhova exclaimed, surprised and even a little offended. "I'm married."

"Listen, Petukhova, what's your first name?"

"Motya."

"Motya, I could kiss you!"

... Lenochka woke up with the warm sunlight tickling her face.

The women were talking in whispers and doing their toilet.

From the corridor came the steady tap of crutches and the lonely scrape of a foot.

Petukhova, sitting on the edge of her bed, hastily daubed her lips with a stump of pencil. The woman who had spoken the previous day in such a pleasant voice was tying her hair with a ribbon. And the woman with the red scars on her face was holding a mirror before her; wetting the tip of her finger, she drew it over her eyebrows and said in an affected nasal tone:

"Aha, Petukhova! I'll have your Seryozha."

The tap of crutches sounded nearer.

Petukhova was leaning forward in a tense attitude; in her hand she held a piece of string, the end of which was tied to the door handle. She, too, was listening intently.

When the tapping was quite near, Petukhova pulled on the string and the door opened.

In the corridor stood a lad with his shoulders hunched over a pair of crutches; a stump of one of his legs dangled helplessly between the crutches.

But Lenochka had no time to study Seryozha properly. A nurse banged the door sharply.

"Mind, Petukhova, I'll complain to the doctor." And turning to address everyone, she said reproachfully: "She ought to be ashamed!"

The nurse snapped the string off the door and took it away with her. Laughing loudly, the woman with the disfigured face said:

"Petukhova! He didn't even look at you, it was me he smiled at. . . ."

That night Lenchka's pains started again. Petukhova once more held her hand and whispered to her.

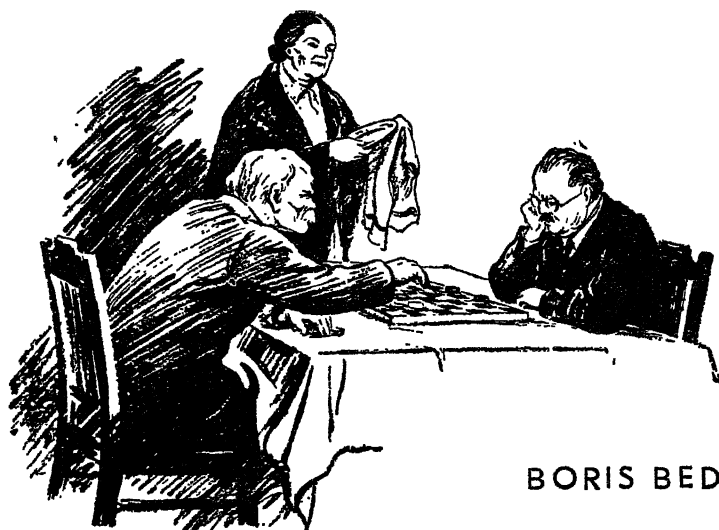
"Don't be afraid to cry out, I'm weak-willed myself. Now Zykova there, the one with the bad face, there's a woman for you. She shielded her professor when a bowl of acid burst in their laboratory. It's not only her face; half her body was burnt. Every time she has a fresh dressing on, it's like being skinned alive, but she just grits her teeth and doesn't make a sound. And that one over there, the one who never sits up, the one with such a nice voice, she went through a real martyrdom to have a baby. They were cutting away at her for two hours with only a local anaesthetic, and they say she didn't even wince. See what important company you're in! I feel as if I had been at the front, among a lot of heroes. It's had a real effect on my character. There's a hospital for you! And in Ward Seven there's a woman who's been just about the limit for sticking it out. . . ."

Lenchka listened to Petukhova's quick excited whispering and wept, but not from pain, for pain had almost disappeared; but from a lofty, elated feeling that filled her whole being. It was as though some new world had been revealed to her where lived only very beautiful people, with great tenderness and strength, whose words thrilled like music; where the misfortune of one brought suffering to everybody, and the joy of one was shared by all. A world of wonderful people the like of whom she had never seen before.

A blue night-light was burning in the ward.

The muffled sounds of the city reached them faintly, and Petukhova kept talking and talking, but Lenchka no longer heard what she was saying. She was asleep with Petukhova's small firm hand pressed against her cheek.

Translated by Robert Daglish



BORIS BEDNI

THE OLDER GENERATION

1

IT USED to be that the Fedunov's house was always noisy and gay. The children took after the father, Semyon Grigoryevich, and they grew up sociable and friendly. Each of them had several bosom friends, and for as long as anyone could remember, it was not they who visited their friends, but their friends who visited them. The whole year round there was never a quiet day; there was always the noise of running feet, of games and of singing. In the rainy days of spring and autumn, their mother, the plump Yekaterina Zakharovna, complained that the young visitors brought too much dirt into the rooms; and she suggested, for a start, that at least those who wore no galoshes should be discouraged from coming to the house. But the father, who loved company, argued with his wife that visitors brought more brightness into life than galoshes did. And so everything went on as before.

Years passed. The children grew up, became engineers and agronomists, started families of their own and scattered to various places. Only the eldest son, Pyotr, stayed at home, working as the head of the town's waterworks. Even after his marriage Pyotr lived for quite a long time in his parents' house; but then came the time when he was offered a flat in the centre of the town. The flat was near his office, it was sunny and well fitted, and so he took it. The best-informed of the neighbours hinted that the reason for his going was not the attractions of the new flat, but the fact that Pyotr's wife did not get on with her mother-in-law. Some of the neighbours blamed Yekaterina, others the young daughter-in-law. It was difficult to decide who was in the right and who was in the wrong; for was not the word "quarrel" represented in Chinese by the ideogram of two women under one roof?



After their son had left them, the old couple lived alone, just as they had done thirty-seven years before in the first year of their marriage. How big and empty the previously crowded home seemed.

Pyotr seldom visited his parents, excusing himself on the grounds of the high pressure at which the town's water supply had to work. Even more seldom came letters from the others, and the letters that did come were disappointingly short and all following the same pattern,—How were they keeping? How was everything? All well here. Love and kisses.

One of the daughters, Vera, who had married the director of a big factory in Siberia, sent her parents a money order for 200 roubles each month, forgetting, however, to put a few words in the space for correspondence. Her father protested once, and after that Vera used telegraph money-order forms on which the authorities neglected to provide space for correspondence.

Yekaterina told her husband that she put Vera's money regularly in the savings bank, but in fact she sent it to their youngest son, a student, in addition to what Semyon sent him each month. Semyon found the revealing receipts behind a mirror in the bedroom, understood everything, but said nothing. Every now and then, however, he would amuse himself by speaking to Yekaterina about the mounting interest on Vera's money and the comfortable life it would mean for them one day.

The letters, "shorter than a sparrow's nose," the rare visits of Pyotr, the smudged family group in which the father seemed to wear an angry look and the mother a forced smile, the ink-spotted oil-cloth cover of the table where the children did their home work—that was nearly all that reminded the old couple of their sons and daughters.

Semyon began to notice that his wife paid special attention to the radio weather reports. She was pleased that they frequently mentioned the regions and towns where her children lived. So, when there were long intervals between letters, Semyon on his return from work would ask: "Well, what sort of weather are they having?" And Yekaterina would announce: "Vera's having 36 degrees of frost, so I suppose she's wearing her snow-boots already. At Vasya's there's mild winds and slight precipitation. They didn't say anything today about Grisha. At Fenya's it's raining, and I suppose she'll get a cold in her head again. And Sasha still walks about in light clothes; it's over 60 degrees where he is. He's the clever one."

"How big our country is," Semyon would say with surprise each time, and would sit down to dinner feeling as if he had received news from all his children. However, Semyon was not too displeased with his sons and daughters and he considered that everything was going more or less as it should and according to the natural course of things. When the children were small, they needed his help; now they could fend for themselves. They had heavy responsibilities on their shoulders and had their own children to bring up; so how could they spare much thought to old people? The day had only twenty-four hours. . . .

Now few people visited the Fedunovs. An old doctor, Kondrat Ivanovich, a neighbour of theirs for nearly thirty years, would drop in on Sundays. Yekaterina would serve tea, fussing around much more than was necessary for one visitor. Semyon drank his tea strong and unsweetened, although he sucked a lump of sugar between sips: the visitor drank his weak and well-sweetened. Over tea they would talk unhurriedly about the weather, world events, and the tree-planting that was going on in their

street. After two cups, Semyon would wipe his moustache and suggest casually that they should try conclusions on the draughts-board.

Kondrat would pull out of his waistcoat pocket a massive silver watch bearing the inscription "Pavel Bouret, watchmaker by appointment to His Imperial Majesty," and would say hesitatingly: "Not a bad idea, but I'm afraid I ought to be going. . . ."

"Oh, we could manage one game," Semyon would suggest, tempting his visitor by rolling the draughtsmen about on the board.

"Well, then; just one game," Kondrat would agree, tucking Pavel Bouret back in his pocket. And he would play five or even ten games, forgetting completely that he "ought to be going."

At first it was difficult to say who was the better player: one time the visitor won, the next time the host. But eventually Semyon started winning game after game. Despite their old friendship, Kondrat as a man with a superior education was ashamed to lose to his neighbour, a works foreman. To console himself he said that draughts was a primitive game and he continually tried to persuade Semyon to learn the noble and highly intellectual game of chess. Semyon, however, did not wish to risk his championship in his old age and argued back, very reasonably, that chess-men crowd the board too much, and he loved space. But draughts, now! That was different. There a man could see everything clearly, a straight game!

On great holidays an old crony of Semyon's from the same factory, Zykov, used to call. This silent man was interested neither in tree-planting nor in world happenings. He did not play draughts. With him Semyon passed the time in an entirely different way.

Each time he called, Zykov brought a bottle of vodka and placed it on the table without a word. Yekaterina, ever an observer of the laws of hospitality, was courteous to the visitor, brought food and passed polite remarks like, "Do try this pickled cabbage," "Don't you like our herring?" and so on. But if she had had her way she would never have allowed Zykov and his vodka to darken her door. A quarter of a century earlier a cousin of hers had drunk himself to death, and because of that she counted all men without exception as alcoholics. Let them out of your sight for a moment and the devil Drink would get them. So, defending the sanctity of the home, she would whenever possible shield her husband from bottled temptation.

At first Zykov came only on the Seventh of November and the First of May. Then he added Christmas and Easter. It was not that he was turning to religion in his declining years; it was simply that he needed an "occasion" for a drink. Without a justifying occasion, drinking was to him a sign of weak will—or just plain soaking.

With the years, the number of Zykov's annual occasions grew. After the war the two old men celebrated V-day, and also, of course, VJ-day. In more recent years, when Zykov's children also left the parental nest, he would call on Semyon on International Women's Day and Trinity Sunday.

Sometimes Semyon was visited by young workers, his apprentices at the factory. They would enter the house with the triumphant gleam and the disordered hair and clothes that proclaimed for miles around the fact that once again their owners had made some wonderful invention, some great contribution to Soviet industry. The lads would pull from their pockets tiny, crumpled drawings, the sizes of which were in indirect ratio to the greatness of the idea. Or they would bring models of metal-cutting dies, wrapped up in handkerchiefs of bachelor cleanliness, models which

for lack of a more suitable medium had been cut out of the homely potato. And Yekaterina would mutter that now she knew why green-groceries were so dear on the market.

More often than not the young inventors went away crestfallen, walking the whole length of the town to their homes, refusing in their humiliation to avail themselves of the ample evening bus service. But occasionally Semyon would slap them on the back with his small but heavy hand, and say: "Good for you, my Comsomol! You bring joy to an old man like me. You've got your head screwed on all right."

It happened at times that "his Comsomol" would arrive without any plans or models and the talk would go in circles, until Semyon would ask impatiently: "Come on. Out with it. What's the trouble?" And the answer would come: "It's—it's something personal."

The boys knew that Fedunov would never betray their secrets, and they poured out their troubles to him, confident in the long experience and natural tact of the old man—to the great surprise of Yekaterina who, for as long as anyone could remember, held the opinion that although her husband perhaps understood one or two things about his work, he knew no more about the delicate affairs of the heart than the man in the moon.

The most frequent of the visitors were the retiring Kolya Savin, a turner, and the cheerful, lively Kiryushka, a cutter.

2

In her secret heart Yekaterina considered that the problems of her life were much more difficult than those of her husband. Semyon had his factory, which not only supplied him with a constant, eight-hours-a-day occupation, but also fixed his regime for the rest of the day, imbuing everything he did with a purposefulness that she envied. In the mornings he hurried conscientiously to work and in the evenings he had his well-earned rest. Yekaterina had no factory to hurry to, and her household work shrank considerably after her children had gone their several ways.

As soon as Semyon left for his work, quietness settled on the house, a quietness so deep that even the soft tread of a kitten sounded loud. The oppressive quietness, the approach of old age, the dragging hours, affected Yekaterina's health. Before, when she had to sew, wash and cook for a large family, she had no time to be ill, and was always well. But now all kinds of illnesses, each more complicated than its predecessor, started attacking her.

Yekaterina was no fool; she quickly adapted herself to her new life and even started getting some advantages from it. When she felt out of sorts or—what amounted to the same thing—when she imagined herself out of sorts, she immediately went to bed, placing within easy reach a biscuit-tin which served in the Fedunov household as medicine chest. She took pleasure in watching how upset Semyon was at her illness and how he would spare no effort to please her and satisfy her every caprice. Like every wife in the world, Yekaterina was sure that her husband did not care for her as much as he should; and now she enjoyed watching his anxiety. With her pillows propped high, she lay for days in bed, sighing deeply but without reason, and scaring the simple Semyon with references to her impending dissolution. Yekaterina soon got tired of the homely

remedies. The counsels of Kondrat Ivanovich seemed too simple for her ailments; and perhaps for the first time in her life she went to a polyclinic.

It was there that a new tempting horizon opened up before her eyes. The severe, antiseptic cleanliness evoked her immediate respect. The people waiting for treatment were beyond all comparison more polite than the crowds in the foodshops; no one "jumped the queue"; everything was exactly as it should be; the conversation was on a much higher level; no one complained about short weight, short change, and similar prosaic matters. In harmony with the surroundings, the conversation was refined and recondite, and words unknown to Yekaterina, words like arterio-sclerosis, therapist and glucose were bandied about freely. There was one cloud on this newly-discovered horizon: Yekaterina recognized among those in the waiting-room a neighbour, the wife of a dispatch clerk. This woman had for long been the laughing-stock of the street: she could not heat milk without it boiling over, or fry rissoles without burning them, and her husband had to sew on his buttons himself. In her own home, where her uselessness was apparent, butter wouldn't melt in her mouth; but here she held forth in the loud, confident voice of an old habitue, praising this doctor, running down that one, and all with a ring of authority and infallibility. Yekaterina felt that her own prestige had suffered by her remaining at home in obscurity; and from that day on she became a regular attendant at the clinic.

Thus in her declining years, to the amazement of her husband, she became an addict of that most insidious of all passions, the passion for doctoring. Making up for all the lost years, she plunged into a welter of hydropathic and electropathic treatments, insisted on being examined by specialists, was X-rayed, and had a general dental overhaul. The waiting rooms of polyclinics became for her both a club where she passed her time pleasantly and a medical school where she learned about all the ills that flesh is heir to and all the means that exist to cure them. The doctors, although they could find no trace of disease in Yekaterina, would always prescribe medicines for her, medicines which although they effected no cure, produced no ill effects.

While she was still a newcomer to this polyclinical world Yekaterina felt some qualms about occupying the precious time of the medical staff. But the doctors were exceptionally polite; they listened to all her complaints, and, little by little, she assured herself that these well-mannered, well-qualified people had been appointed by the state to minister to her, and that therefore any qualms she might have had were unjustified. Everyone has his part to play: she was there to be cured, they were there to cure her.

Yekaterina attended the polyclinics so conscientiously that in no time she was accepted by the other habitués as one of themselves. She could show newcomers the way to the various consulting rooms and give advice as to which was the best pharmacy for which medicine. Later she became so well-informed that once she actually contradicted the dispatch clerk's wife on the matter of arterio-sclerosis itself. Yekaterina had a retentive memory, a memory unobstructed by the litter of bookish study; she remembered every word uttered about arterio-sclerosis by the best authorities of the waiting-room, and although she could not quite clearly understand the meaning of those words she repeated them with such exactitude that the dispatch clerk's wife was forced to retire in disorder.

During this period Yekaterina enlarged the circle of her acquaintances so much that it was an ordeal for her husband to walk with her. She bowed at every few steps, just like Semyon's factory manager when he was walking in the factory grounds during the lunch hour. At times, when Semyon asked whom she was greeting, he would get the casual answer: "Oh, just someone who was X-rayed with me," or "A fellow-patient in the ear, throat and nose department."

At first he was merely amused at her preoccupation with medical matters, but very soon it affected him personally. She suddenly became a devotee of vegetarianism and started inflicting on her husband dinners of vegetables and various jellies. Semyon had little patience with this treatment and threatened to go for his food to a canteen or even to restaurants. Yekaterina, who looked upon restaurants as the beginning of all evil, became scared. She speedily reconsidered her views on vegetarianism, and meat courses again made their appearance on the Fedunov dinner table.

Her devout belief in the efficacy of the latest discoveries of medical science lived quite happily in her mind side by side with a blind faith in miraculous remedies which are handed down from generation to generation all unknown to the doctors. Semyon would often see at his house doddering, rheumy-eyed old crones and pert young women of Gypsy type in long, flowered shawls, who brought herbs, roots and mysterious potions for Yekaterina. He began to worry that his wife might poison herself. The roomy biscuit-tin could no longer hold all the medicines, and Yekaterina procured from somewhere a round hat-box which Semyon disrespectfully dubbed "the annexe."

Eventually the idea came to Yekaterina that she should make a trip to the Caucasus, immerse herself in the warm waters of the Black Sea, and make a stay in Pyatigorsk to take a course of mud baths for her chronic rheumatism—which according to Semyon she did not have and never did have. When she inquired about the price of the railway ticket and ordered a locksmith to make a new lock for her old travelling bag, Semyon began to think that she would indeed carry out her grandiose plan.

In justice to Yekaterina it should be stated that she devoted only her free time to valetudinarian matters; her first concern was her husband. At times she would give up her place at the head of the waiting list in the clinic and hurry home so that dinner would be ready when Semyon returned. The only worry she had about her trip to the south was Semyon's loneliness and who would look after him. In secret she cherished a plan to take him with her; that would free her from worry and him from the troubles of a grass widower.

During Yekaterina's valetudinarian period, Semyon became a lover of fiction. Before this time he had had little leisure for reading; he was fully occupied with his work, with doing jobs about the house, and with his family. Every child had to be properly clothed and shod and brought up, and there was no time for reading for pleasure. Besides, in his factory the machinery became steadily more complicated and to keep up his prestige with "his Comsomol," he had to put his old craftsman pride in his pocket and spend evenings studying brochures like any beginner.

Now, however, Semyon immersed himself in fiction. There were few books in the house, so his new passion sent him to the factory library. There he saw for himself that so many books had been written that, even

if he had started as a baby, he could not possibly get through them all. Being a careful man, he did not want to make a blunder in his choice and, himself a specialist, he preferred to trust a specialist; so he asked for help from the librarian—and never regretted doing so. The librarian was young and did not even wear glasses but in her many-shelved place of work she was just as at home as he was in his.

Semyon became an enthusiast for "solid" reading, and he preferred thick books to thin ones. His favourites were books about long-forgotten days, books that told of the joys and sorrows of the people of earlier times, the kind of houses they lived in, the kind of clothes they wore, how much they earned from their non-mechanized labours and how much they paid for bread, meat and other things which in all times and in all countries were the necessities of life. When he failed to find an answer to these questions in any book he became angry and damned the author as an irresponsible.

In his eagerness to share his new-found pleasures, he tried to interest his wife in reading, but with no success. The books had a curious effect on Yekaterina: she would understand everything on the first page, but on the second or third page there would come a moment when her eyes would follow the lines but her thoughts would follow a different course—would eventually come round to daily domestic matters which had no connection whatever with what she was reading. At times it would happen that her eyes were taking in some declaration of passionate love while her mind was wondering whether there was enough paraffin in the stove for Semyon's breakfast next day or whether the new medicine she had heard mentioned in the polyclinic waiting-room would be a good remedy for lumbago, or whether her neighbour would spoil the sewing machine she had loaned her. After she had read a book from cover to cover she remembered only a few disconnected episodes; about its main theme she had not the slightest idea.

Semyon was annoyed with her and thought that she was simply lazy; but it was not Yekaterina's fault that the thoughts and feelings of the characters could not banish her own personal concerns. She could, when necessary, be actively interested in the fortunes of her relatives and friends, but it was beyond her to care what happened to persons who were merely the creation of someone's imagination. She had plenty of worries of her own without adding to them in such a way. In fact, Yekaterina had lived so long in the close confines of purely family matters, had her feet planted so firmly on solid ground, that everything abstract, everything that did not directly affect herself, her husband and her children, failed to hold her attention.

That, then, was how they lived in their declining years. Semyon worked in his factory during the day and read fat books at home in the evening; Yekaterina ran the household and devoted her free time to seeking cures for her ailments, real or imaginary.

3

One winter day, when Semyon was at work in the factory, a bright idea came to him. It was nothing world-shaking, but it promised to reduce labour-consuming work in the making of axles. After being shaped on the cutting machine the axles would go to the turners. Semyon, watch in hand,

checked his idea and came to the conclusion that one qualified worker could do the two operations himself if the cutting machine were brought alongside the turning lathe.

He had to decide which worker would be most suitable; and here Semyon wavered. To complicate matters, the work on axles was done by his best operators, Kolya Savin and Kiryushka. The two had been running neck-and-neck for first place on the production board for a long time. Now one would lead, now the other. The two were skilled both at cutting and turning. As an added complication the boys were both courting the same girl, the driller Klava. To choose one would be to offend the other gravely. A solution would have been to let both do this work, and this would also help production. But the manager of the shop, who from the start was doubtful about Semyon's idea, did not want to take the risk and it was only from respect for the old master craftsman that he allowed even one worker to be allocated to two machines.

Semyon was on the point of choosing Kolya for the work when he noticed that there existed some tension between Kiryushka and the other lads. Kiryushka was a recent-comer, but in a short time his seniors had recognized his intelligence and industry. But the other lads, who some years before had entered the factory from the vocational school, did not get on well with him. Among the girls the lively, joking Kiryushka soon became a favourite. At dances they would prefer him as partner; at the works' canteen they would reserve a place for him at their tables; they would, without being asked, buy him tickets for the 8 p.m. cinema, for which there was always a rush. It was quite understandable that these successes of Kiryushka did not please everyone. Semyon knew this, of course, but he considered it only natural: the less trustful ones were usually left in the lurch.

Now, however, the other lads had broken completely with Kiryushka. Only a few of the older ones would speak to him: the others ignored his very existence.

Kiryushka tried to hide his feelings and would whistle gay tunes as before. But Semyon was not deceived; he knew that bitterness was gnawing at the lad's heart. Kiryushka's face grew thinner and his attitude was that of a cornered animal. Semyon used his eyes and his mind and decided that it was the girl Klava who was at the bottom of the trouble; apparently she had fallen for Kiryushka's charms and preferred him to Kolya.

Semyon became angry with "his Comsomol," and although he respected Kolya more, he gave the new task to Kiryushka as a gesture of his disapproval of the bad feeling against the lad.

The turning lathe was put alongside Kiryushka's cutting machine and the lad started operating the two machines. Conscious of his foreman's support, he became gayer, while the other lads sulked and felt offended by Semyon's decision. His first success at the new task elated Kiryushka and he tried to speed up the revolutions of the machines. At first the higher speed proved difficult, but Semyon helped to improve the tempering of the cutters, and work proceeded satisfactorily.

Kolya and the other lads stopped going to the Fedunovs; but the successful Kiryushka became a regular visitor. Semyon and he would even go together on Sundays to the bathhouse, and the old man introduced the youngster to the complicated art of taking a steam bath. Nevertheless Semyon avoided any mention of the quarrel between Kiryushka and the

other lads; and for reasons of diplomacy he behaved in the factory as if nothing had happened, although it hurt him to realize that he had lost his ties with "his Comsomol." He hoped that finally the boys would learn their mistake and that good relations would be re-established.

Yekaterina noticed that there was something strange going on. But when she asked why Kolya did not visit them any more, Semyon answered in his most convincing tones that Kolya was studying for a very difficult examination at his evening school, and Yekaterina was completely satisfied.

The restless Kiryushka put forward a new idea to Semyon—to install a second cutting machine. He pleaded that he could cope quite easily with the three machines. Semyon saw that the lad wanted by his excellent work to make the others ashamed of themselves and so create a better atmosphere. And, of course, he wanted to emerge the winner from this prolonged quarrel. Semyon made allowances for human weaknesses and the lad's immaturity, but he had to think of the shop in general and advised Kiryushka to wait until Kolya too was working two machines. However, Kiryushka's ambition became known to the shop manager, who was pleased when great work achievements that would get a mention in the press were going on in his domain, and bringing a measure of glory on himself. Up to that time he appeared not to notice Semyon's experiment, but now he came to life and insisted that the innovator be given a third machine.

On the eve of Kiryushka's first trial with three machines, Semyon suddenly fell ill.

4

Whether he had been standing in a draught, or had breathed too deep of the frosty air or had given shelter to some ungrateful microbe Semyon did not know; all he knew was that, suddenly, in the middle of his work, he felt bad. He fought off the feeling and remained at work till the end of the shift; but when he reached home he became worse. He had a temperature and there was a dull, not unpleasant ache in his bones which made him want to stretch his arms and legs lazily. He had a taste in his mouth as if someone had slipped a copper coin into it.

The alarmed Yekaterina sent a neighbour's girl for Kondrat Ivanovich. The doctor came at once, bringing with him his leather bag. He was serious and businesslike, and quite unlike the Kondrat who used to come on Sundays to play draughts. Frowning, he inspected Semyon's tongue, took his pulse with fingers still cold from the outside air, and tapped the patient's chest with bony knuckles. He did all this with a stern, almost forbidding air, so that Semyon might respect his profession and realize that Kondrat Ivanovich could be beaten at draughts only because his mind was occupied with many other matters that were far more important to humanity. Semyon felt a belated regret that he had so regularly beaten Kondrat; and in contrition he vowed that when he was better again he would lose the very first game they played.

"Well, old man, we're going to be ill," stated Kondrat in his best bedside manner after completing his examination, speaking as if he were announcing some pleasant news or inviting his friend to join him on an excursion. "You'll have to stay in bed for a week or so."

When Yekaterina learned that Semyon was not dangerously ill she stopped worrying. She considered that when Semyon was in perfect health

he bossed her, and now she was perhaps even a little pleased that he was completely in her power, and that she could rule him to her heart's content.

It was a trying time for Semyon. He was stuffed with pills and mixtures prescribed by Kondrat. Yekaterina, too, was active, and paraded the knowledge she had garnered in the waiting-rooms of the clinics. Semyon realized that to his wife his illness was an examination in medical science which she had to "sit."

The famous biscuit-tin and its cardboard "annexe" were now installed on a table next to Semyon's bed. They stood open, ready at a moment's notice to dose Semyon with all kinds of medicine. Before he settled down for the night Yekaterina rubbed him down with mutton-fat, applied cupping glasses to his skin and made him swallow raspberry tisane and an evil-smelling concoction which she described as balsam. This balsam looked like tar and tasted of ink in which hot peppers had been brewed.

Semyon felt rather better next morning. Whether that was thanks to the cumulative effects of Kondrat's and Yekaterina's doctoring or to his own strong constitution repelling the microbes, his feverish feeling had almost vanished and there remained only the dull ache in his bones—an ache which had now somehow acquired a luxurious quality. For an active man like Semyon it was dull to lie in bed all day. All kinds of sad thoughts chased through his mind—thoughts about his old age, about the tension in the workshop, about the ingratitude of his children.

He felt a sudden desire to receive a letter—a letter from someone who loved and respected him not for any work he had done but for himself, without weighing his merits or demerits. He awaited eagerly the postman's coming, but the postman brought only a paper. He read the paper from beginning to end, and although it contained several good articles, a biting feuilleton and a hard-hitting cartoon, it could not take the place of even a brief letter in the handwriting of one of his children.

Time crawled along on its lowest gear. One subject after another came into his head, but everything appeared different from what it had been before he had taken to bed. It seemed as if the hitherto trustworthy machine which carried him through life had stopped with a jolt at some unknown place for some unknown purpose. Now he found himself at a loss. "Shop" worries which a short time before had been so important to him, now seemed dim and distant. He had had slight illnesses in the past and his annual holidays had cut him off in some measure from the problems of the factory; but this present break seemed much more sharp. "I've become old . . . old," he told himself despondently.

Most of the thoughts that came to him were sad ones. Suddenly the image of Pavel, his son who was killed in the war, stood clearly before him. In life Pavel had been no different from the others, but now he was better, kinder, more loving and with all the qualities that the other children lacked. He was sure that Pavel would never have deserted his parents in their old age; he would have lived with them under the same roof, and if work had ever called him away for a time his letters would have been frequent and never less than four pages. . . .

By evening Semyon's spirits rose a little, in the hope that some one from the factory would visit him. He did not expect Kolya Savin or any of his friends, but he did expect the innovator Kiryushka.

Yes, this was the wrong time to fall ill, he lamented. Then he recalled that every time he had fallen ill had been the "wrong time."

Semyon's neighbour, a book-keeper, had already returned from work, but there was no sign of Kiryushka. Either there was a special meeting going on, or Kiryushka couldn't manage the three machines and hated to disappoint him, decided Semyon.

Late that evening Pyotr arrived. He looked worried as he entered the room but after a good look at his father he calmed down. Semyon was sitting up in bed and looked more like someone resting after work than an invalid. Pyotr sat down, asked his father how he was keeping and at the same time glanced mechanically at his watch.

As if he were timing himself, thought Semyon, and lost all interest in telling his son about his symptoms.

Pyotr began speaking about the advantages that would accrue to the town as a result of the new water-tower. Having exhausted that subject he turned to the topic of his son Vitya's good marks at school. As he was leaving he told his father to take good care of himself. Altogether he spent twenty minutes in the sick-room, and what these twenty minutes meant in his busy life could be judged by the fact that three times during the visit he consulted his watch.

Next day, Semyon became bored and fidgety. His wife would not even hear of his getting up before she had tried all her medicines on him. After a heavy breakfast of fried potatoes and pickled mushrooms—illness did not change Semyon's simple tastes or his appetite—he started thinking about how to make time pass. He had nothing to read; as luck would have it, just before his illness he had finished reading his last book from the library, Turgenev's *Hunter's Notebook*, and had not exchanged it. For want of anything better to do he listened to one children's broadcast after another.

At the most interesting passage of a Nanai fairy-tale, a ring at the doorbell drowned the roar of a tiger from the radio. It could not be Kiryushka, because he would be at work. Also the ringing was insistent, as if the caller were someone with authority, not a rank-and-file worker. Who on earth could it be? They couldn't leave him in peace even when he was ill.

Yekaterina went to the door and returned with the chairman of the factory committee whom Semyon had recently criticized at a trade-union meeting for apathy. It could not be said that the chairman was lazy: it was not as simple as that. He belonged to that category of people who considered that an entry in an official report recording something done was an aim in itself. He was so frightened to miss recording the slightest activity of the factory committee under his leadership that this pen-and-ink work swallowed up all his time and his not inconsiderable energy, and he had none to spare for the actual work. It was for this that Semyon had criticized him.

The visitor asked Semyon if he was receiving the proper medical attention, and if he had any claims on the trade union, for example, in the matter of special dietary. No actual mention was made of Semyon's criticism, but Semyon could see that his visitor was by no means displeased with the role of one who returns evil with good. Was not his very presence a complete answer to the captious criticism that the factory committee and its chairman were apathetic to the needs of the workers? And the suspicion

came to Semyon's mind that this visit would be solemnly recorded in the report presented at the next meeting.

"Thank you for visiting me," he said, "but I'm not in need of any help. My wages are quite enough for any special dieting, and as for medicines, I've more than enough of them."

The chairman retired without achieving anything, and decided that Semyon was becoming proud and stubborn in his old age.

It was only after his visitor had gone that Semyon realized he had missed a good chance to have his library book changed. But, after further thought, he told himself that even if the chairman had brought him a book—which God forbid!—then, under the headline in his report "Actions undertaken by the Committee during the period under review" there would have appeared the entry, "Supplying the invalid S. Fedunov with books"; and alongside it, in the "quantity" column, would have been a statement as to how many books of how many pages.

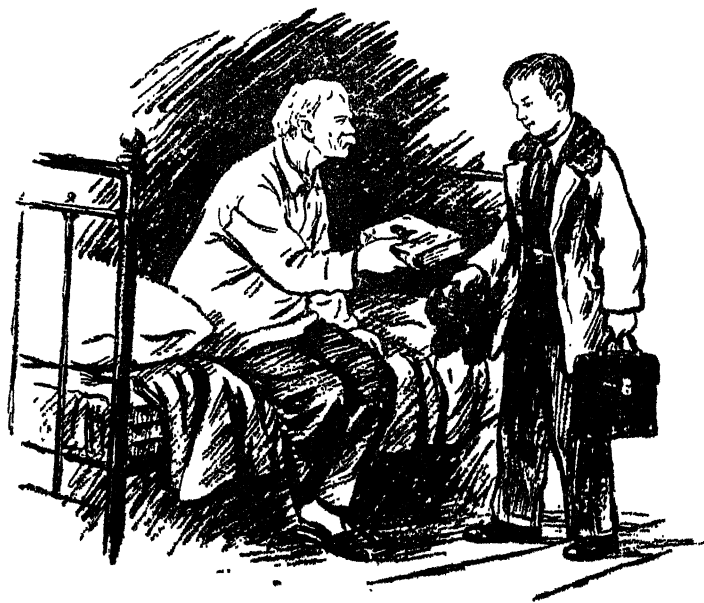
"Ekh? To hell with him and his social activities," muttered Semyon, and dismissed his regrets about the book from his mind.

5

At midday Semyon's grandson Vitya called. His school was not far away and he often visited his grandparents, knowing that he would always be a welcome guest.

When Vitya was younger, Semyon was always ready to play with him and answer his endless questions—What were sweets made of? and window-glass? and snow? and the sun? But Vitya was now thirteen years old and studied all kinds of physics and chemistries, and so the unschooled but proud Semyon was frightened to reveal his ignorance and lose the respect of his grandson.

Vitya fidgeted around the sick-bed, chattered about his activities in the "Handyman" circle in the House of Pioneers, and then slipped out



into the kitchen to his grandmother. Vitya was Yekaterina's favourite; she was inclined to spoil him and she always had some special titbit for him when he came. Semyon noticed with a tinge of bitterness that now Vitya confined his questions to everyday and craftsman matters about which he still accepted Semyon as an authority, but he saved his questions on more scholarly matters for his better educated friends.

"Well, Semyon, we've got to leave you," said Yekaterina, putting her head into the sick-room. "I'm going to the dentist's and Vitya will walk along with me."

Semyon was left alone in the flat. The radio was broadcasting music that had neither melody nor spirit. "Overture again," he muttered knowingly, and switched it off. He got out of bed to look for the *Hunter's Notebook*, intending to read it again; but he saw on the top of the dresser a thick volume with tattered binding. It was twice as fat as Turgenev's book and therefore it earned Semyon's immediate respect.

Vitya must have forgotten one of his school-books, he thought, picking up the book. What were they teaching lads of thirteen nowadays?

The book, however, was not a school-book. The title-page read: "Captain Grant's Children—by Jules Verne—a novel." Wasn't it too early for his grandson to be reading novels? It seemed only yesterday when he was crawling on all fours.

As an experienced client of the library, Semyon could say from the very appearance of a book whether it was good, bad or indifferent. The appearance of this one was tempting: its cover, originally blue, had acquired a fast, grey colour; its dog-eared pages indicated that it had passed through perhaps a hundred pairs of hands.

Standing in the middle of the room he read a whole page to check his impressions. It was a description of a volcano in eruption, but the exacting Semyon could find nothing in it that would corrupt the mind of his young grandson. He turned to another page and found himself right in the middle of a storm at sea. A hurricane of incredible strength was driving a ship towards land. There was a narrow entrance to a haven, but heavy seas were running and threatening to dash the ship against the rocks. What a situation, thought Semyon, who had already made the fortunes of the crew his own. He hurriedly turned a page to see what would be the outcome. Everything was all right. The captain gave orders to pour several barrels of seal oil on the waves, the sea quietened down for a moment and although it soon boiled up again with renewed fury, the ship had time to slip into quiet waters.

"So *there's* the way out!" murmured Semyon with satisfaction as if he were not a master-craftsman in an engineering factory but at least a bosun aboard ship. On another page Semyon read about the travellers being attacked by red wolves. Red wolves? Up to this moment he had never heard of red wolves; his path and theirs had never crossed. He had managed to get through life quite well without them; but now here they were, and he told himself: "What a number of different creatures there are in this world of ours!"

He decided that the book deserved no condemnation, that, indeed, it might be quite a worthy book. If Vitya were asked in an examination to say what kind of wolves he knew about, he could reply that there was the common grey wolf and add that there were also a different kind, the red wolf. "Good lad! Top marks for you," the teacher would say. Yes, a

good lad, that grandson of his. Clever little devil, too. Reads a novel and at the same time picks up a lot of odd knowledge—combining work and pleasure.

Semyon shut the book and peered challengingly at the profile portrait of the author on the cover. Had he stuck to the plain truth in his descriptions of the storm and the wolf attack? The bushy beard, powerful face and the far-seeing eyes of Jules Verne reassured Semyon. Here was no flighty young teller of tall tales, but a solid, experienced man of his own age with no nonsense about him. A simple, muzhik face, he had, too, not unlike his friend Zykov.

When his surprise at this resemblance had abated, Semyon settled down in bed, opened the book at the first page and started reading without skipping a single line. It was easy reading, and the print was large enough to suit his old eyes. The text was enlivened with frequent illustrations and Semyon was thus able to check whether the mental pictures he formed were correct.

It was not the illustrations, however, that provided the greatest thrills. Before he knew where he was, Semyon found himself plunged in the middle of breath-taking events. Adventure followed adventure so fast that before he had properly emerged from one he was in the thick of another and greater one. Never before had he read a book like this; never before had he even suspected that such books existed.

In company with the characters in the book, Semyon braved the ocean waves and thought nothing of catching huge sharks with a lump of fat on a hook. When it came to the deciphering of the sea-stained message, Semyon deeply regretted that he had no knowledge of foreign languages to help his friends aboard the good ship *Duncan*.

Before Yekaterina returned from the dentist's, Semyon had learned many valuable things which he could put to good account if he decided to take a trip round the world in his later years. These considerations, however, did not weigh with Yekaterina. She was annoyed to see her husband so obviously engrossed in his book. An invalid should be an invalid. A sick-room was a sick-room, not a reading-room in a library. She looked sourly at her husband; she rattled the pots and pans in the kitchen protestingly; but knowing her husband's stubborn character, she did not try to take the book away from him.

Semyon read until lunch time and got through nearly a hundred pages. He put down the book only when Yekaterina brought him a very full plate of borshch.

"You should be ashamed to read such nonsense at your age," she said, glancing at the illustrations.

"You're no expert on these matters," retorted Semyon, rushing to the defence of the book. He jabbed with his finger at an introductory page where it was printed plainly in black and white, "For those of older age."

"Ah yes. But it is for *children* of older age," said Yekaterina.

"Where does it say 'for children'?" demanded Semyon with a glint in his eye. "Show me where. If you had read the book you would know better."

Yekaterina gave a snort of contempt.

"What time have I for reading your stupid trash? And who would do the shopping, wash the floors and cook meals for you, Mister Reader?"

Semyon was on the point of making the very reasonable comment that she cooked for herself too, but he saw that this might generate a certain heat, so he maintained a discreet silence.

"Aha!" exclaimed Yekaterina, following his train of thought. "Thought better of it, didn't you?" She put a big lump of meat in his borsch, so that he could see that from the greatness of her heart she forgave him his evil ways.

After the meal Semyon took up his book again and Yekaterina busied herself with making a warm shirt for him; she could take no chance of him catching cold again, now that he had proved himself unfit to be an invalid. But she little suspected that this husband of hers was far out of earshot, thousands of leagues away at the other side of the world.

Semyon made short work of the Atlantic crossing, skilfully navigated the narrow Straits of Magellan, sailed northward up the Pacific and landed on a lonely Chilean shore. Following the 37th Parallel, he was soon climbing the Andes. Here, at the will of Jules Verne, who ensured that there was not a dull moment in Semyon's journey, he was shaken by an earthquake, which however caused no casualties in the party.

Semyon and his companions encountered one peril after another. Once clear of the mountains, they were trapped by floods and lost their horses, but found miraculous refuge on a giant Ombu tree, where they remained, wet and hungry, above the roaring waters. But that was not enough for M. Verne. He set fire to the tree by lightning and crowded the waters with crocodiles. For a moment Semyon was scared. Surely this time there could be no way out; some would be burned to death, some would drown, some would perish in the jaws of the voracious crocodiles. But then—what about the rest of the book if all the heroes were killed off? A quick glance told him that he had gone through only two-thirds of the book, and so his fears seemed unjustified.

He was not mistaken. The tree was uprooted by a whirlwind; its plunge into the waters scared off the crocodiles and at the same time extinguished the flames; it was borne away to dry land where it delivered up its load safe and sound.

"Well, well, well," gasped Semyon partly in protest against the way that Jules Verne had "piled on the agony," partly in admiration for the ingenious way in which he had rescued his characters.

Semyon closed the book for a moment to gaze once again at the portrait on the cover. Unperturbed by all these hairbreadth escapes, the eyes still looked calmly into the distance, as if promising Semyon that there was plenty more to come. Speaking in a whisper too low for the inquisitive ears of Yekaterina, Semyon told M. Verne: "You know all the tricks, don't you?"

6

Another day passed without Kiryushka putting in an appearance; but in the evening Zykov arrived unexpectedly. To avoid any leg-pulling, Semyon hurriedly hid his book under his pillow.

Zykov, with his usual silence and deliberation, hung up his coat and hat, smoothed his greying hair and beard, and entered the sick-room. He shook the invalid's hand with exaggerated care, and sat down on a bed-side chair that squeaked under his weight. He made no attempt to console or cheer up his friend or prophesy an early recovery. That kind of thing he

left to new friends; his friendship with Semyon went back more than forty years and did not rely on any outward show of affection.

The two understood one another without recourse to words, and they valued this silent understanding. At times, when they were working on different shifts they did not see one another for months, but that did not dampen their friendship. In difficult times the very knowledge that you had such a friend was as good as having him at your side. If he gave no sign of his existence that meant that all was well with him, because you knew that he would never hesitate to ask for help or advice if it were needed.

Semyon and Zykov never spoke of their friendship, either to one another or to other persons. To a casual observer it would seem that it had no great warmth, that the only bond between them was the fact that in the course of years they had grown accustomed to one another. Yet their friendship held much more enduring warmth than a showier one could hold. Many of Semyon's young workers would have been surprised to learn how deep was the friendship between their own foreman and the foreman of a neighbouring shop.

Mutual respect did not, however, stop them from poking fun at one another. Zykov joked that Semyon would lose his eyesight reading all those fat books, or that his love for steam baths would boil away the last few years of his life. In his turn Semyon would express the fear that the woman who had the misfortune to be the wife of the silent Zykov would lose all power of speech. And he prophesied that when Zykov exhausted all the holidays on the calendar he would start drinking on ordinary days and finish up as an old soak. But they chaffed one another only when they were alone and either of them would jump to his friend's defence if any other person dared to speak in that way.

As the years went by, fewer and fewer friends of their own age remained, and they knew that at their time of life even a slight illness was a warning signal. Zykov saw that this time at least Semyon would certainly pull through and hoped that they both would pull through many future illnesses. But when they knew that, why discuss it?

"How's the factory? The chimneys still standing in the same old place?" asked Semyon, leading up to the matter of Kiryushka by a circuitous route.

"Yes, and still smoking away."

"And my Comsomol? How are they doing?"

"Fine."

"Fine?" mocked Semyon, raising himself impatiently in his bed. "Is that all you have to say? How's Kiryushka doing? Did he fail completely with three machines or did he make any kind of show at all?"

A trace of surprise showed itself on the placid face of Zykov. He was on the point of speaking, but he checked himself, and in silence pulled out the factory newspaper from his pocket. On the front page there was a large photograph of Kiryushka standing proudly beside a cutting machine and the manager of the shop beaming over his shoulder like a benevolent, if rather patronizing uncle. Semyon understood. Kiryushka had not failed; he had kept the three machines going.

"Kiryushka spoke over the radio yesterday 'sharing his experience,'" said Zykov. "Today he was filmed at work for the newsreel." He took a deep breath after this unusually long speech and added: "So that it can

go down in history, you know." He pondered for a time and, to raise his friend's spirits, added: "Your pupil is on the way to fame, Semyon."

Semyon breathed deeply, but said nothing. He was ashamed to confess to his friend that Kiryushka could not spare a moment to call on an old invalid. He feared that the shop manager was spoiling the boy with all this publicity. Semyon had seen many times how a boy's head could be turned by sudden glory. But how quickly this open-hearted, cheerful Kiryushka had swallowed the bait!

Meanwhile Zykov inspected the medicines on the table, snorted and asked: "Pouring it down you, eh?" Semyon made a gesture of resignation.

"I've brought you some medicine too," murmured Zykov, indicating an inside pocket of his jacket from which there peeped, like a white-headed nestling, a quarter-litre bottle of vodka, popularly known as the "Little One." "Shall we crack it to celebrate your recovery?"

Semyon was touched. His recovery was ranked with the big occasions that required toasting in vodka. "All right," he said, "let's have it."

Without further ado Semyon quietly got out of bed, swilled the drops of balsam from a tumbler into a figus plant, hoping that the concoction would do the unoffending plant no harm. The friends however had forgotten the natural vigilance of Yekaterina, sharpened since the arrival of the tempter. Unheralded, she burst into the room, and took possession of the bottle.

"Oh, but, Yekaterina," protested Zykov. "It's only a little one." But Yekaterina was unrelenting, and to all their pleadings she simply shook her head silently and retired with her trophy to the kitchen.

Zykov scratched his head. "No nonsense about that wife of yours," he said in tones of deep respect. Then he tiptoed to the door, locked it, wedged it with a broom handle, and in silence whipped a second "Little One" from another pocket. With a practised blow of his palm on the bottom of the bottle he ejected the cork, and, holding the glass to the light, he carefully poured out exactly half of the vodka and handed it to Semyon.

"You first," said Semyon. "Maybe my illness is catching."

"Well, here's the disinfectant."

Intuitively sensing trouble, Yekaterina drummed on the locked door with her fists.

"Don't break anything," called Zykov reassuringly. "The moment we've had our drink we'll let you in."

When they opened the door, the mistress of the house stormed in like a tornado, cursing all male humanity as besotted drunkards. Meanwhile, the two friends exchanged vodka-softened looks of understanding, sympathy and comradeship-in-distress. Although the storm of Yekaterina's denunciation broke over them with its full force, they preserved a modest but dignified silence.

At last the storm spent its force. As he watched the retreating Yekaterina, Zykov presented his profile to Semyon, who once again was struck by the resemblance to Jules Verne. Here, thought Semyon, is a man going about his business completely unaware of this marvellous likeness. Anxious to please his friend he said: "There's a foreign author. He writes books about strange lands. And he looks very much like you."

"Quite possible," said Zykov as if he had all his life suspected such a thing. He got up and prepared to go. He already had his coat on when

he turned to ask: "You remember that the overthrow of autocracy used to be celebrated?"

"You mean the February Revolution?"

"Yes, I suppose that's it. . . . Do you remember when it was? I've forgotten."

"If it's the February Revolution you mean, then it's in February."

"Ah, but we've got to work this out more exactly," said Zykov, and Semyon realized that his friend was thinking of another "red-letter day" for his calendar.

After Zykov left, the thought of Kiryushka's ingratitude returned to Semyon's mind. They had spoiled the boy! How ashamed Kiryushka would be when he recovered from this intoxication and saw how badly he had behaved. It would be interesting to see how he would act then. Would he persist in his wrong-headedness or would he remember all that he owed to his old foreman and come to him with bowed head?

Anxious that the keen-eyed Yekaterina should not see how deeply Kiryushka had hurt him, Semyon immersed himself in his book. He had lost his eagerness for the book but he never liked to leave anything unfinished. At first he read with little attention but soon the enthralling narrative captured him although not with the same overpowering force as before.

All day Yekaterina, holding herself firmly in hand, submitted to the domination of the invalid; but when night came she had her revenge. She gave Semyon so vigorous a rubbing-down with mutton fat that it seemed as if she were trying to skin him alive.

Her intention was to prove to her conscienceless husband that he was an invalid, that she was there to nurse him, that it was for her to decide what was to be done in all matters that came within the elastic framework of medical science—a science about which he knew nothing despite all his airs of authority and all his reading of fat books for grown-ups, or children.

She went to bed early so as to put an end to the prolonged reading. Semyon protested, but Yekaterina simply switched off the light and refused to argue.

Semyon could not fall asleep. He was left alone in the darkness with his thoughts, and he thought of everything at once—the missing Captain Grant, his faithful friend Zykov, and the ungrateful Kiryushka. As ever when sleep evades one, his thoughts were endless. Yekaterina lay still beside him, but from long experience he knew that she too was awake and following her ruthless custom of waiting until he begged pardon for all the sins he had committed during the day. But what in God's name had he to ask pardon for? On the other hand he could not be angry with her because she too had acted correctly according to her lights. It was a shame that at her age she should lie there sleepless because of him. He felt a sudden urge to divert the mind of his wife who never had the solace of books to compensate for the tedium of everyday life; he wanted to entertain her with some story that had an uplifting moral. He did not need to search long for a suitable story.

"Yekaterina," he began tentatively, although confident that the outcome of the story would be a pleasant surprise to his wife, "you know, there's a flesh-eating fish called a shark, something like a pike but a hun-

dred times bigger . . . or, maybe, two hundred times. Anyhow, a shark was caught, its belly was cut open and, guess what was inside—a bottle. . . .”

“There you go again,” snapped Yekaterina. “Can’t keep your mind off bottles.”

Semyon coughed to cover his confusion, turned over and faced the wall.

7

Before he had even entered the room Vitya shouted excitedly: “Grandad! Did I leave my book here yesterday?”

Seeing his book in the hands of his grandfather, Vitya lost his fears for the safety of library property. At the same time he was surprised to see his old grandad reading a book of that kind.

“Is it really interesting for you?” he asked. “It’s for boys, you know. Didn’t you read it in your childhood?”

“No,” confessed Semyon, “somehow I didn’t get round to it.”

Vitya suddenly recalled what his father had told him about his grandfather—how he had worked in a factory when he was Vitya’s age and even took part in strikes, and how in the great days of 1917 he had fought as a Red Guard. Vitya regretted his words, which sounded as a criticism of his grandfather for not reading the book at the proper time. He bit his tongue and looked with eyes of respect, not at his old grandfather but at a living representative of the heroic Russian workers who had fought to win a full, happy life for boys like him.

Looks like these were no new things to Semyon: young workers in the factory often gazed at him in this way and Semyon had no patience with them. It was all wrong to look at a living man as if he were a museum-piece. When he’s dead do what you please, but while he’s alive, let the old man live in peace.

Vitya was due to return the book that day, but he hated to disappoint the old Red Guard. Semyon praised the lad’s choice of literature and easily persuaded him to leave the book until the following evening. Their common interest in the book made a link between them, and Vitya, speaking as one equal to another, asked his grandad whether he sometimes turned over a page or two at the most exciting places to see how things would come out.

“Oh dear me, no,” protested Semyon, taking care to avoid his grandson’s eyes.

That evening Yekaterina complained to Kondrat that her husband completely ignored sick-room discipline and kept reading a silly book day after day. In a voice reduced to a thin piping because of her awe for everything medical, she declared that all this silly reading wiped out the curative powers of the medicines and could not fail to cause chronic anaemia.

Kondrat gave a laugh like the creaking of a rusty hinge, and without thinking of the effect of his words on Yekaterina said: “Let him read as much as he likes, so long as he stays in bed until he is better.”

Yekaterina bridled up, and from that moment lost all faith in Kondrat’s medical knowledge. But Semyon felt grateful and immediately suggested a game of draughts. He remembered his decision to lose the first game, but with the draughts-board before him it proved to be impossible. When Semyon saw that he could take two or three men for the loss of one, it was beyond his powers to resist doing so. It was not his fault that he was used

to doing everything in a straightforward manner; and now he could not change his ways. It was easier for him to say in words that Kondrat was much the better player than to throw away a single game to him.

Semyon managed to make the first game a draw. In the second game, however, he not only won, but wiped Kondrat off the board.

"He's recovering!" said Kondrat gaily, very cleverly indicating that he was more concerned with victories in the realm of medicine than on the draughts-board.

Yekaterina had hardly shut the door after Kondrat when the bell rang again. It was an uncertain ring and Semyon's heart quickened. Surely it was Kiryushka. The latch clicked and Semyon heard from the hall the muffled voice of Kolya Savin.

Kolya was the last person he expected. So he had come after all, despite his hurt pride. Semyon brushed away a tear and called himself a sentimental old fool.

Yekaterina welcomed Kolya very warmly: she was glad when young workers visited them, not only because she missed young faces since her children had gone but also because she saw in these visits a recognition of Semyon's special worth at the factory. These visits told her that Semyon and she had lived worth-while lives and that there were people who would remember them after they had gone.

"And how are you getting on with your exams, Kolya?" she asked, taking his hat and coat from him.

"What exams?" asked Kolya.

"Why, your evening school exams, of course."

Kolya Savin guessed that Semyon had explained his long absence in this way, and, to help the old man, he said: "Oh those! . . . They'll begin next week and I'm studying day and night. They scare me to death."

"Don't you be scared of anything," advised Yekaterina cheerfully. "Study what you have to study, and then you won't be scared."

"All right. That's what I'll do," agreed Kolya, ashamed of his deception.

Semyon sighed with relief. He thought with gratitude that men, real men, always understood one another and came to the rescue even without so much as a warning wink.

Kolya hemmed and hawed for a time and then entered the sick-room. Semyon had to look upwards at his young visitor, and perhaps because of this his look appeared guilty. Kolya greeted him clumsily, put a shallow blue-ribboned box on the table and sat down on the edge of a chair. There was a long, awkward pause.

The box helped to smoothe matters. It was lying on the table with its blank side up but it was plain that it had come from a sweet-shop. The blue ribbon was so bright that it caught the eye. Kolya saw Semyon's sideways glance at the box and was glad of the opening it presented.

"It's from the boys," he blurted out, and shyly handed it to the old man.

Semyon looked sternly at the bright picture on the lid and muttered: "What is it?"

"Chocolates," answered Kolya almost guiltily.

"Why did you do it?" asked Semyon angrily. "And you a turner too. What's the idea of bringing chocolates to a sick old worker? They

give me heartburn. I eat them and then wish I hadn't." And he tapped the box disdainfully as if he had a surfeit of such dainties.

"At first we wanted to get you flowers, but we couldn't find any. It's the wrong time of year."

"Flowers?" snorted Semyon. "Who do you think I am—a flower-sniffing school-girl? I see there are some things you got to learn yet."

"That's true," confessed Kolya. "Nobody taught us things like that. In the vocational school we had lots of subjects—mathematics, metallurgy and so on—but what to bring to a sick teacher, nobody told us anything about that." After a pause, Kolya, thinking of future occasions, asked: "Do tell me, what is the best thing in a case like that?"

"How should I know? If I was bringing the present I would know what to get; but, as it is, why should I break my head with problems like that?"

"But what can I do, then?" asked Kolya, thinking aloud. "I can't take the chocolates back. The boys would all laugh at me."

"That's right enough," agreed Semyon, and added confidentially: "I tell you what. We'll ask the old girl to make tea, and the three of us will attack the chocolates. That should beat the heartburn."

Soon the busy little oilstove was roaring in the kitchen. Semyon gazed with admiring, fatherly eyes at Kolya's athletic figure and said simply: "Good of you to come."

"The other boys and I wanted to come the day before yesterday, but we were frightened. . . ."

"Frightened? Of me? Am I so terrifying?" There was a touch of sadness in his bantering tone.

"Oh, Comrade Fedunov, how can you speak like that? The boys think the world of you . . . as they always did. The only reason we didn't come to see you was because we thought we might meet. . . ."

Kolya stopped and stammered, rather than mention Kiryushka's name. Semyon understood and coughed sympathetically.

"Ahem? . . . And why weren't you scared to meet him today?"

"Oh! Some things have become clear. We asked him how you were and he told us—well, anyhow, we guessed that he hadn't been round to see you."

"What was it he said? Come on, let's have it."

Semyon scrambled out of bed, so anxious was he to learn what was behind Kiryushka's ingratitude to one who had done so much for him.

Kolya hesitated. Since the beginning of the visit he had felt embarrassed, but now he was completely in a quandary. He could speak no good of Kiryushka, because he knew no good about him; but to speak ill of him here was just as bad, because it would make Semyon think that he was merely getting back at his rival.

"Come on, Kolya, out with it," ordered Semyon. "Let's hear it all—all of it."

"I don't want even to repeat his words. . . . Well, roughly, it's this. His idea was that your illness was a diplomatic one—that you didn't want to be blamed if he failed."

Semyon gasped. "And the earth didn't open up and swallow him?"

"No," answered Kolya as if he were responsible for phenomena of this kind.

Semyon's head drooped; he lapsed into a gloomy silence.

"Please don't take it so hard," pleaded Kolya. "He often said things like that. We live in the same hostel, so I know him. . . ." Kolya checked himself, realizing that he had broken his resolve to speak of his rival only with cold politeness. But why should he bother? His only concern now was to soothe the old man's feelings.

Semyon raised his head suddenly. "Look here now, Kolya," he said, "aren't you envious of Kiryushka?"

"There's nothing to envy," retorted Kolya. "Even if they handed me all that fame on a plate I wouldn't take it."

"Why's that? I can't quite understand you. For me, I wouldn't mind seeing myself in a film. What's wrong with the fame that's come to Kiryushka?"

"It's cheap. Did you hear his speech on the wireless? . . . Pity! He grabbed all the glory as if it was him that suggested the two-machine business and the special tempering of the cutters. It was all Kiryushka! We lads couldn't believe our ears. He mentioned you only at the end— . . . and the foreman Comrade Fedunov also gave me some help."

"So he mentioned 'help'?" commented Semyon with a smile. Anyone else would have raged, thought Kolya, but in Semyon nothing was noticeable except a steely glint in his eye. "Maybe, Kolya, he had no time to say all he wanted on the wireless. He might have been flustered in front of the microphone. Or maybe his speech was cut down so as not to clutter up the programme with references to a lot of unnecessary old men. . . . There could be plenty of explanations."

"He managed all right to mention all the important ones, from the manager of the shop down to the smallest trade-union official who did nothing whatever to help. And you think he just overlooked you?—No, he did it deliberately. He didn't want to share his glory with you. So your illness was a godsend to him."

Semyon shook his head; it was beyond him to take in all this at once.

"And to think what a polite, nice-mannered lad he was. He would meet me at the factory gates and greet me not as an old foreman but as if I were some beautiful actress. In the tram he'd always try to buy my ticket for me. . . . To think of him—the slimy worm."

Only now did Semyon realize how he had been fooled by Kiryushka. Only one thing was not yet clear—why he had stopped his flattery and made so sharp a break. Semyon thought hard but only one answer would come to him: Kiryushka's head had been turned by his successes and he felt he could get on perfectly well without the help of the old foreman. He had used him as a stepping stone and then marched on.

Semyon breathed heavily; he was not used to being made a fool of. The fact that the youngster considered him of no further use hurt Semyon more than all the shameless self-praise on the wireless.

"Pretty smart one for his age," muttered Semyon. "And now it's all in the bag. Just try to prove that anyone helped him in his work, and see what happens! He knows, too, the young bastard, that I won't argue with him. Bring him to book? It can't be done; he's made too smart a job of it."

"Never mind! We'll get him," promised Kolya. "The lads want to discuss his conduct at a Comsomol meeting. That will bring him back to his senses."

"Oh! What a fool I was. What a fool. . . . It was you I should have put to work on the two machines, but I felt sorry for that Kiryushka. . . .

Apart from everything else, do you know why I had doubts about you, Kolya? . . . He snatched that squint-eyed Klava from you, and you. . . ."

"What do you mean, 'squint-eyed'?" Kolya was offended. "She only seems that to you because her eyes are so black. . . ."

"Well, well. Black-eyed if you like. But that's not the question. He pinched your girl and you . . . what did you do? It didn't even affect your work. No warm blood in you. I don't think much of people like that."

"Oh, why should I get excited if she preferred a windbag like him to me?" said Kolya, as if he were speaking of something long dead and buried. "He just wants to have his fun with her and then leave her. But I was serious. I meant it for the whole of my life. . . ." His face darkened as he thought of Klava, but he pulled himself together and added proudly: "Well, anyhow, she's not worth worrying about."

Semyon looked at the lad with interest. "That's how you try to console yourself, is it?" he suggested understandingly.

Kolya put his hand to his forehead. "Ye-es," he admitted. "That's what I try to do."

"And does it work?"

"Sometimes. And sometimes . . . not so good. It's different at different times."

Semyon pondered this answer for a time and then decided: "It means you loved her."

"Well, yes, that's what it means."

After a pause Semyon asked: "And how is she now?"

"I think that Kiryushka has quarrelled with her. She doesn't seem to mean anything to him any more. Now he's making up to a girl inspector. But Klava doesn't notice me either." Kolya's voice quavered and a new note of warmth and admiration crept into it as he went on: "Yes, she's a proud girl; she'll take a long time to get over it." Then realizing that he was praising the "unworthy" one, he covered his confusion with a cough and stole a sidelong glance at Semyon. The old man, however, was concentrating all his attention on taking the ribbon off the chocolate box, as if he had long been looking for a piece of blue ribbon of this length.

"Now, tell me the truth. Were you very offended when I put Kiryushka on the two machines?" he asked suddenly, carefully bandaging his thumb with the ribbon. "Let's have it straight—but the truth."

Kolya in silence recalled his state of mind at the time and replied with a note of challenge in his voice: "Yes, I was offended."

"And you were right. It is a great mistake for you youngsters to think that because somebody has grey hairs on his head he can do no wrong. When you reach my age you'll see how true that is. . . . And as for checking Kiryushka, well, we'll discuss that later. He shouldn't have been in such a hurry to throw me on the scrap-heap. Eh, my lads, perhaps we'll see the day when Kiryushka will come here cap in hand."

"And will you forgive him everything then?" Kolya was obviously interested.

"We'll see about that when he comes. I never had much love for double-talkers."

Yekaterina brought in the cups and saucers and they sat down to tea with chocolates. Apparently fearing heartburn, Semyon extracted a tiny chocolate fish and while he nibbled it he questioned Kolya about factory matters. Yekaterina, for whom heartburn held no terrors, was biting

valiantly into the chocolates with her newly reconditioned teeth. Kolya gave Semyon detailed answers to his questions. At first he fought shy of the chocolates, but later, when he was carried away by the conversation, his hand kept returning to the box.

Apart from Kiryushka's well-trumpeted achievements there had been no special events during Semyon's absence. The smelters and tool-makers had kept the shop well supplied and Semyon's group, as before, were keeping well ahead of schedule. Good lads, thought Semyon; they had got into the swing of working independently. But somehow the thought did not bring him any great joy. His reason told him that the work could not possibly stop because of his illness, but even so he felt sad to know how little effect his illness had, and how small a place he occupied in the life of the factory. He could die one day and nobody would turn a hair; the factory would go on standing where it always stood as if there had never lived such a man as Semyon Fedunov with all his petty achievements and his shameful blunders like that one over Kiryushka, blunders unforgivable for a man of his age.

Listening to Kolya's confident voice Semyon recalled what a shy, awkward lad he had been when he first came to the shop four years earlier. He came straight from the vocational school, in theoretical matters a professor but in practical matters hardly able to tell a nut from a bolt. The question arose in Semyon's mind: Who had taught the lads their trade and whom had they to thank for the fact that they could now stand on their own feet? Semyon put the question straight to his conscience and gave himself the straight answer: It was the foreman Semyon Fedunov.

So interested was Kolya in the conversation that he did not notice how he and the sweet-toothed Yekaterina had played havoc with the chocolate box while Semyon had been content to nibble at his little fish. Now, looking at the empty box, he coughed deprecatingly, but it was too late.

"Get better soon," he said as he was preparing to go. And in an undertone he added: "Don't tell the boys that I ate all your chocolates. They'll give me hell for visiting an invalid and eating up the present I brought him."

"I shan't betray you," promised Semyon.

Kolya went out cursing himself for his behaviour and wondering at the old man's cleverness in palming the chocolates on to him without his noticing it.

8

Next day, at 15.40 (local time) Semyon Fedunov brought his globe-trotting expedition to a successful conclusion. His wife was not at home on this memorable occasion: she was in some food-shop buying something tasty for her now convalescent husband. Semyon got tired of lying in bed, and, in the absence of any restraining force, he took a walk round the room. He studied with great interest his unusually clean and pale hands as if they were the hands of someone else; and he thought about the book which he had just finished, about Kolya and about Kiryushka. He decided that he would do nothing against Kiryushka; he would merely leave the lad to his own conscience, if he had one.

It might have been the effects of learning that the intrepid Captain Grant was at last safe and sound; or it might have been that the renewed friendship with Kolya promised many happy moments in the future and

the healing of the wounds inflicted by Kiryushka; or it might have been his convalescence; but, whatever was the reason, his thoughts at that moment were benevolent, joyful and spring-like despite the bitter cold outside.

Vitya looked in to collect his book. He was fresh and rosy-cheeked and looked very much like Yekaterina in her early youth.

"I gave you away," he announced, taking off his hat and coat.

"Gave me away? What do you mean?"

"Yesterday our Pioneer-leader said we were too old to read Jules Verne and advised us to read more serious books. I got up and told her: 'My grandfather is nearly sixty and he is reading *Captain Grant*.'"

Semyon did not know how to take the news that now all the Pioneers knew what books he read during his illness. To be on the safe side he frowned and asked Vitya: "Well, and what did she say to that?"

"At first she spluttered, and then she went deep into the whole business. Now there are sanatoria and Pioneers' palaces for children, but our grandfathers and great-grandfathers had nothing like that when they were young because they lived under capitalism. They had no chance to read children's books when they were small. And she also said that you . . . that you were an illustration of the fact that our ancestors did not have a childhood."

"Me an illustration? I'll give the little brat illustrations. Why, she hasn't finished teething yet."

"Oh, but she's in the tenth class," said Vitya with respect.

"A lot of good the tenth class does her. She's picked up some words but she doesn't know how to use them. According to her, people born before the Revolution weren't human beings. . . . And what about you, young man? You hear your grandfather classed with the apes and you never say a word."

"But you didn't understand it right, Grandad. She meant it in the sense. . . ."

"Sense? What sense has she? Of course we didn't have Pioneers' palaces and sanatoria, but we still had a childhood. We didn't spring from nowhere."

Semyon suddenly recalled a spring morning long ago. He was then six or seven years old. His father had just gone to work and his mother was finishing a new, bright-red shirt for little Semyon. The boy was hurrying her and impatiently watching his friends playing on a piece of ground outside the factory workers' barracks where they lived. Only the previous day this piece of ground was drab and dull, but during the night the first warm rain had fallen and now the whole area was temptingly green and flooded with the rays of the early morning sun. The skies were of that deep blue which is seen only in early childhood when you want to go to where the sky joins the earth, and to put your finger on it.

At last the final button-hole was stitched and in a moment Semyon had donned his new shirt which was cooling to the skin and smelt strongly of the factory dressing that disappears with the first washing. His mother warned him not to tease the bull in a neighbouring field with his new red shirt. Semyon's lips promised not to do it but inside he told himself: "That's an idea."

He ran out of the barracks, and at once sought a corner where he could take off his heavy old boots whose many patches detracted from the glow.

of his new shirt. He wanted to give full rein to his joy, and so he did not join the boys who were playing Cossacks and tip-cat. Instead, he ran about the patch of ground in freedom. A warm wind was whistling in his ears and the new shirt was billowing out from his back like a sail. Without a glance at the family's window he knew that his mother was looking out and admiring his fleet-footedness. Even more pleasant it was to feel the envious looks of the boys; no one in the whole world had a bright, eye-catching shirt to compare with his. And how tender and ticklish under his bare feet were the little green shoots of grass that morning. Even now, half a century later, Semyon's old feet felt again that ticklish touch and itched to get rid of his woollen socks and warm felt slippers made by the ever-solicitous Yekaterina.

"We *had* a childhood," repeated Semyon still arguing obstinately with the absent Pioneer-leader. "And we had joys, too. First, the little earliest joys, and then the more solid ones. . . . We boys invented a game—expeditions to the orchard of the factory manager, a Belgian. It wasn't so much to steal apples and pears, but to show off our bravery before one another. It was a big orchard, about nine acres, and it touched the factory yard. There was a watchman with a shot-gun loaded with rock-salt. But that wasn't the worst. In the orchard there were two dogs of some foreign breed, both as big as a calf. Their names were foreign too; the manager hated everything Russian. One was Maas, and the other Schelda. Maas was the kinder one; he would rip your pants off and let you go in peace. But Schelda always tried to get a bit of meat off you and would steal up on you without barking. For that we re-christened her Schelma—the bad one. She chewed through a very important sinew of one of the boys and he was lamed for life. The more timid ones kept clear of that orchard: they would tease the dogs through the fence, and that was the farthest they got."

"And you, Grandad—weren't you timid?" asked Vitya with glowing eyes.

"I was there three times but no more. I won't exaggerate."

"How can you still remember all this? It's so long ago."

"Well. It was something to remember, all right. . . . My schooling finished in the middle of the second year. I learned the multiplication table by heart, but I was never examined on it—I had to leave school because my father died. Mother took me to the factory, lied about my age and I became an apprentice turner."

"A hard life, wasn't it? Did they beat you?"

It seemed to Vitya that although his grandfather loved him as his grandson, he must have a poor opinion of a strapping lad of his age who had never earned a rouble with his own hands and who had never been inside a factory except on a "conducted tour."

Semyon's brow was wrinkled, but not with bitter memories as Vitya thought. It seemed that Vitya had a lop-sided view of Semyon's childhood, as if he had just read some too-sketchy book about the awful conditions of child labour in the old days and now saw his grandfather as a living illustration to that book.

Vitya was looking at his grandfather expecting an affirmative answer to his question. Semyon knew quite well what was going on inside the lad's head. He had compressed all Semyon's long apprentice years into an over-simplified picture, because of his scrappy knowledge of the olden

days. Yes, he'd pushed his old grandad into a mould, and stood back to admire his own work, thought Semyon, straightening his shoulders as if breaking out of this mould. But Vitya wasn't the only one. The lad unthinkingly repeated the mistake of many of Semyon's friends who were now long past boyhood and had considerable education. All those who were inclined to over-simplifying life repeatedly attempted to squeeze Semyon into a ready-made mould which they accepted as the correct one because of its handy size and "standard" shape.

For himself, Semyon, despite his easy-going nature, would not agree that he conformed to any mould—not because there was anything unusual in his size or complexity, but simply because he was a normal, living being. And so, however hard they tried to squeeze him into a mould, there was always something left outside. Today, for instance, the whole essence of his apprentice years had been left out of the mould fashioned by Vitya's unskilled hands. And how could one trim to any stereotyped shape some original, "home-made" idea of Semyon's about life and people—an idea that made no claims to be scientific yet still was cherished by its author and very satisfying to him at his time of life? Any mould that could embrace this idea with all its ramifications and roughnesses, would require so much material that no moulder would consider Semyon worth the expenditure.

"Well, Grandad, did they beat you?" repeated Vitya.

Semyon looked at the lad for a time. He wanted to warn Vitya against this stereotyping of human beings, but he feared that the lad was too young to understand.

"Yes, we did get a kick or two now and then. But our real trouble was shortage of sleep. By the end of a shift our eyes felt as if they had honey on them—bitter honey, for that was the cause of many an accident at the machines. Even by Tuesday we were longing for Sunday when we could get a proper sleep. . . . But that's not the whole story. Though we worked for the money-bags we had our good time. I still remember the first time I cut the teeth of a cog-wheel with my own hands. Just a plain little cog-wheel, but I can see it still.

"Your Pioneer-leader would say there was no real joy in work like that. She would say I had become just another wage-slave increasing the profits of the bosses. That's true, and still it isn't true. That is not only because we were nearing the time when we would no longer work for a boss and not only because soon our craftsmanship would serve all the people. From our present heights we can look back through the years; but in those days we could look with simple joy and pride at something like that rough cog-wheel, knowing that we had made it. And, mark you, there was nothing wrong in that. The man who can't do a job of work conscientiously is worthless. The more you respect the ability of your hands, the sooner you want to free them from chains. And you couldn't become a fighter against the old rulers until you felt you were on top of your own job. You mustn't brag of your craftsmanship but it is the duty of every working man to respect his hands. After all everything began from these hands and everything goes on thanks to them. . . . Does that mean anything to you, Vitya?"

Vitya nodded his head.

"And friendship among us apprentices was something different from what it was before we started work. Before, hardly a day passed without

a fight. One street against another. If you saw a boy from a rival street you would go for him. Any excuse would do. If he had red hair, wallop him for it. But when we began working in the factory, we weren't so ready to raise our hands against another poor devil like ourselves. When there was a beating, there was always a good reason for it—for instance, if any boy started telling tales to the foreman or trying to curry favour with him.... The factory brought us close together and gave us a common aim. And although we didn't know the word 'collective' then, we managed to create a very real collective among us. . . . Our first wages made us feel grownup, and equal in rights to the other workers."

His first wages! On his way home that pay-day he kept his hand in his pocket, fearful that he might lose the precious money. He had to pass the market place with its temptations of boiled sweets and toothsome pumpkin seeds. He crossed the square with his gaze resolutely fixed on the ground and he brought his wages home intact to the last half-kopeck. His mother was washing clothes for somebody. Without a word he pulled her work-worn hand out of the soap-suds, pressed into it all his silver and copper coins, and, imitating his father's voice said, "Here, take it!"

His younger brother and sister were gazing at him fixedly; his mother stood with the coins in her hand, her eyes brimming with tears. She wanted to embrace him, but suddenly felt shy and merely whispered: "Our breadwinner!"

Then his mother busied herself laying the table, but all the time she kept the money in her hand. It could not have amounted to much, for she could close her fingers over the coins.

"Yes, it's a wonderful thing, your first wages," said Semyon quietly. "To some boys this too-early growing up brought troubles. They tried to be grown-up in everything, began smoking, swearing, and even going to the dram-shops. A boy like that, although he would much prefer to suck a boiled sweet, would drink beer and, maybe, to show what a great man he was, would mix vodka with it. But there were only a few like that among us. Most of the boys brought their wages home and helped their families as much as they could. We began to see another side of life and gradually left all our childish interests behind us, to face a steep climb. When the men had their meetings and rallies, we boys would be there. They had secret meetings in a glade in the woods, and we would be posted as scouts. We were proud and eager to do this work. We would pretend that we were gathering berries or playing hide-and-seek, but when we spotted anybody suspicious, we would start halloo-ing as if we had lost one of our playmates.

"At times we would make such a noise that people would hear us not only in the glade but back in the workers' barracks. Usually we would halloo for Misha Borshchov. He was a fat-headed little boy who couldn't even go and do his business without getting lost. When we were wanted for this work the men would say to us, 'Come tomorrow to the glade and halloo for Misha Borshchov.' And so, because of us, this little fathead became famous all over the factory."

The memory of his boyhood escapades brought a smile to Semyon's face. "And that's how we grew up," he went on. "Little by little we improved our skill, became real workers and were drawn into the thick of the fight. Because of our rawness and youth it was at first like a game—the riskier the better. I wouldn't say that we understood all the details

then, but at least we knew what was expected of us and were more a help than a hindrance. So, we not only suffered under the heavy yoke of autocracy as that Pioneer-leader of yours thinks, but we also in our own way helped to break it and prepare ourselves for the Revolution. If we had done nothing but howl when we were beaten and moan about our sufferings, there would have been nobody to bring Soviet power into being and to build these sanatoria and Pioneers' palaces for you. . . . *That's* how it was. . . . You and your illustrations!"

9

Long after Vitya left, Semyon remained sitting up in bed gazing with fixed, unseeing eyes at the spout of a teapot which Yekaterina had left on the table. On the very tip of the spout there was a spot that caught the light, and somehow it was easier for Semyon to recall the past years when he directed his eyes on this spot.

His memory, now reawakened, recalled a host of other incidents, milestones on his life's path. That path was little different from others of its kind and it had not brought Semyon to any great heights, but he had followed it honestly, without any attempts to steal a ride. He trod it step by step from the beginning right up to this forced stop, not so far from the inevitable, final stop.

Twilight was creeping upon Semyon from all sides, and soon it possessed the whole room. Only the oblongs of the windows, catching the light reflected from the snow, remained visible.

For some reason it was Semyon's youthful years that came back most insistently to his mind. The early events of his life, seen through the mist of later years, seemed hard to believe now. He had a feeling that what he recalled had not happened to himself but was something he had read in some bulky volume that spoke straight to his heart.

The gay and the gloomy pages of this book were jumbled together and it was difficult to say which bulked largest. But, as ever, the intervening years sifted the memories, discarding the heavy and gloomy ones and preserving the light and gay ones. . . .

Semyon heard the lock of the front door turning—quietly as if someone were suppressing a cough. Yekaterina, still wearing her shawl, entered with her shopping parcels and radiating cold like a snow-man. She was surprised that there was no light burning and imagined that her husband had fallen asleep waiting for her. But Semyon stirred in bed and she asked disapprovingly: "Why are you sitting there in the dark like a barn-owl?"

"Well . . . just thinking," said Semyon as if he had been caught red-handed in some crime. Like many old and faithful wives Yekaterina was displeased when her husband fell into deep meditation without any apparent reason. She never allowed herself luxuries of this kind, and when Semyon indulged in them it seemed as if he were trying to escape her control and this the conscientious Yekaterina could not allow.

"Let's leave the light off and sit in the dark for a time," said Semyon.

What was wrong with him now, Yekaterina wondered. He seemed to get less manageable from hour to hour. She hung her shopping bag on the back of a chair and took off her coat with its collar of unidentifiable fur, a present from her daughter in Siberia.

From the shopping bag came the penetrating but delicate smell of apples that had been exposed to the frosty air. Yekaterina sat down on the bed and remained silent in the darkness. Semyon recalled that a week ago Kiryushka had sat on the chair from which the shopping bag was now hanging. How attentively he had listened to Semyon's advice; how respectful had been the look in his eyes. Semyon's anger against Kiryushka had now lost its sharpness and he could think calmly about the lad. In his heart, softened by memories, a feeling stirred, whispering to him that he was partly guilty for what had happened. The boy had gone off the rails because of inexperience or weakness of character, and Semyon had failed to check him at the proper time.

For all the many hours he had spent with Kiryushka he had not learned enough about the boy. His mistake had been to overvalue the lad's character, to give him the attributes of all the best types. Semyon could not escape the conclusion that he too had made the mistake of trying to fit a living person into a ready-made mould. It was no excuse, that the mould he had chosen was an excellent one, made to measure from the dimensions of lads like Kolya Savin and the other lads with whom he had passed the cold and hungry first winter of the war. He had been deceived by Kiryushka's youthful high spirits and energy, and by the Comsomol badge he wore, a badge which to Semyon had been a guarantee of the wearer's honesty and goodness. He had forgotten that it was easier to stamp a badge out of metal than to hammer out a true character.

In his heart Semyon believed that matters could be straightened out. There was one thing he had to know: was the flaw in the boy's character a deep one, or would a good planing-down remove it and reveal the sound material below?

Plans started running through his head as to how Kiryushka could be "rescued." First, it would be necessary to isolate the lad from the shop manager and let him stew in his own juice. Then the other lads should apply pressure—without anger, but strongly, so that Kiryushka could feel the power of the collective. Of course, Kiryushka's pride would make itself evident at that stage—a pride that had been inflated by his flash of fame. Then Kiryushka would either resist and become set in his evil ways or would get over this illness and become a man. Meantime it would be useful to find some good way to show the lad what would happen to him if he went on the way he was going. It would have to be done almost casually and little by little, so as not to scare him off. In fact it would be quite a lot of work. And Semyon would have to return to the factory as soon as possible, for the boys might prove to be too heavy-handed for a delicate business like this.

Then there was the quarrel between Kolya and Klava. It would be a good thing to get that patched up; but this was even more delicate a matter and who could say what was the best way to tackle it? Semyon shook his head in surprise at the complexity of the problems life was pushing on to him. Could it be that he was simply inventing all these tasks so that he could feel that he was needed? No! His memory assured him that he had tackled many problems like that in the past, so evidently he had been born like that.

The smell of balsam which had dominated the sick-room all these days was fighting a losing battle against the young, fresh smell of apples. It seemed to Semyon that the balsam bottle and the whole "annexe" of tisanes and pills were receding from him.

In the darkness which was hiding all the unattractive signs of age, Semyon imagined for a moment that he was only twenty years old and that beside him was sitting the lively eighteen-year-old Katya. Yekaterina, who always felt sleepy in the darkness, yawned loudly and with gusto, shattering Semyon's illusion.

"It's time we sent a parcel to Vasya," said Yekaterina in her slow, dull voice. "He'll starve himself on those student meals."

These words made the good-hearted Semyon ashamed of having dreamed impossible dreams while Yekaterina was thinking of important, practical matters. Anyhow, what possessed him to dream of changing the hard-headed Yekaterina for the empty-headed Katya? Had not the slim Katya become the plump Yekaterina because of years of living with him, bearing his children, and doing all in her power to meet the many needs of the family? All these long forty years she had looked after him and their children without sparing herself, and, when at times she got on his nerves she did it for no evil purpose but simply from too great conscientiousness.

Semyon shook himself free of his day-dreams and only one thing was left in his mind: beside him there sat not the slim, young Katya, but the plump old Yekaterina, the mother and the housewife. Semyon put a penitent hand on her soft shoulder and Yekaterina, quickly responsive, moved closer to him.

They sat cheek to cheek in silence. The dark room smelt of apples.

Translated by Natalia Lukoshkova





By YURI DOBRYAKOV

1

THE girls usually gathered at the Kvashnins' because their house was large and roomy. It smelled of milk and herbs, and against the walls, hung with embroideries and family photographs, stood pine benches that Grandad Fedot had planed until they were white and shining. Not the least of the house's attractions were the Kvashnin sisters, Nadya and Olga, who both had gentle, trusting dispositions and were sparing of words. From early in the morning their hair was neatly combed and their faces glowed from being washed in cold spring water.

As soon as they arrived, the girls would range themselves on the benches near the windows. The sisters always sat next to each other—quiet, amiable girls, who looked alike and dressed alike and had the same strong, nimble fingers. They sat up very straight so that their backs would not tire or their figures grow lumpish. That was how Granny Praskovia had sat in her time, and this accounted for the girlish grace of her figure today, although failing eye-sight kept her puttering about with the samovar, getting tea ready for the lace-makers instead of joining them in their work.

All kept silent for the first hour, as had been the custom from days of old. The only sound to be heard was the clicking of the bobbins, as if a little stream were rushing over pebbles, knocking them against one another, sorting them and counting them. Then the black-eyed, black-haired Panka Malashkina would begin to sing softly in a deep voice. It was said that her father had been a Gypsy. Little oval-faced Nyura Mescheryakova would join in, to be followed by all the others—some in high clear sopranos, others like Panka in deep voices. They sang many songs, but all of them were sad and long-drawn-out. Otherwise the designs of the lace would not have come out right. And not once were heads raised from

the pattern; it was as if no one paid any attention to the song, as if it began and ended of itself, and they had nothing to do with it.

At seven o'clock Granny Praskovia would serve them each a cup of tea. Somehow or other Grandad Fedot always turned up for tea. He would seat himself in the corner, suck up his tea noisily, smack his lips, blow into his saucer, grunt with satisfaction, drink four or five cups, and then climb up on the stove-bunk, where he would lie without stirring. The girls drank their tea in silence, crunching off little bites of the lump sugar each had brought with her wrapped up in a clean cloth. When tea was over they would go out into the entrance and painstakingly wash their hands—nothing could be worse than to take up their bobbins with sticky fingers.

Later on they would be joined by the young boys of the village. The boys would enter quietly and clear their throats cautiously before sitting down opposite the girls on the benches kept for them. And they would politely go outside to smoke. In time Sanka Barinov would slip the strap of his accordion off his shoulder and let his fingers run lightly over the keys as if just trying them out, then play the same tunes the girls sang, tunes as long drawn-out as a northern evening. The ancient and intricate art of lace-making was honoured in the village both for the skill it required and the profit it brought in. To be sure, lace-making was not for the men—that went without saying. But they came and played to the girls to keep the time from dragging—after all, northern evenings are oh, so long!

Sometimes the usual course of an evening would be interrupted. This happened most often on Saturdays, when Granny Praskovia came back from visiting a neighbour of fifty years' standing in a state that Grandad Fedot, lover of pompous phrases, described as "a slight fermentation of the spirit." On such occasions Grandad would climb up on the stove-bunk without waiting for tea and lie gazing down at Granny with the beady eyes of a rodent. And the girls would crowd about her in expectation of the usual tale.

"And once it happened like this," began Granny Praskovia as if resuming a tale already begun. "From the Queen of the Poles comes a message to the Emperor-Tsar that reads like this: Be so kind, my most respected, as to send me a lace mantle made of the very finest of thread. Now the tsar couldn't very well refuse, being of one blood with her. So off goes the word: Is there such a lace-maker in my kingdom? And back comes the answer: Indeed there is; on the Sukhona river, in the village of Zarodovo, lives one Praskovia Savvishna Kvashnina, who can make not only a mantle. . . ."

"A lie, a lie, you shameless old woman," wheezed Grandad Fedot from the stove-bunk.

The girls knew only too well that Granny Praskovia was given to exaggeration, and they glanced at each other and laughed stealthily, so as not to hurt her feelings. But they stopped laughing when Granny opened her iron-studded trunk and took out a big sheet of paper with a gold insignia bearing the two-headed eagle on it; and a round medal with an arrow-like tower embossed on it; and a certificate in a Morocco-leather binding bearing the seal of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

"A lie, you say? And what about this Grand Prix Medal?" said Granny reproachfully.

But most of all the girls loved to hear Granny tell how the old masters had invented the lace designs known to them from childhood. Then

all those "Wheels," "Bows," "Fantasies," "Coins," "Birches," "Bats," and "Midges," would become associated with dear familiar scenes from village life. It was as though gifted lace designers took their best baskets with them wherever they went and put into them all their impressions, selecting the most vivid to be transferred to the pillow, the pattern, the tips of fingers that miraculously manipulated sixty and more bobbins at a time.

Once a year, in the summertime, the Lace-Makers' Union sent an instructor in the person of Terenti Pavlovich Kapralov, a fat, blustering man who always wore a Russian blouse and hip boots. He would visit the homes of two or three of the lace-makers and then disappear for a week or so—duck-hunting in the flood-lands along the Sukhona river. On his return he would make an extensive report on lace making. None of the women listened. He spoke about Brabant, Valenciennes and Liege laces that nobody had ever heard of, and he told them that the output of lace had fallen in Belgium at the end of the last century. No one in Zarodovo was interested in the output of lace in Belgium, although Granny Praskovia did say when the report was over: "I know, I read about it." But that was just to uphold her reputation, for everybody knew that Granny Praskovia was expert at reading patterns, but had never learned to read the written word.

Sometimes Terenti Pavlovich would say things that hurt and angered the girls. Taking a lace scarf to the window to see it better, he would grumble:

"What are all these wheels and bows? Geometrical designs, that's all. You want to put feeling into your lace, to put your heart and soul into it. Am I right, lady-birds?"

"Put feeling into it!" said Granny Praskovia with asperity when he had gone. "Take a look at this, girls, and tell me whether there is feeling in the design or not!"

And she unfolded a lace throw that only the most skilled and imaginative craftsman could have made, so unusual and exquisite was the design. It was Granny Praskovia's favourite and was called "Frost." A lace-maker is sitting in her hut on a winter evening gazing at the window dimly lighted by the glow of a torch. And the window has been etched in ice by the fierce frosts of Vologda, and on a background as pure as untrodden snow are stars of unspeakable beauty, pines and firs all clad in white, with white hares crouching among their trunks.

The girls sighed and grew pensive as they studied the pattern. Nadya Kvashnina peered into the darkness beyond the window, and it seemed to her that the one for whom she had been waiting all these months was standing outside looking at her, and that presently he would knock at the pane and ask her to join him forever. . . .

2

But he did not knock at the pane or ask her to join him. He just came to the house with the other young men one evening and sat down beside Sanka Barinov and listened to him play, smiling to himself for some reason. The appearance of the young agronomist made quite a stir. The girls whispered and exchanged glances, and even Grandad Fedot, who had crawled up on the stove-bunk by this time, coughed and asked for a drink of kvass.

And indeed it was an event. Pavel Semyonovich, the agronomist, had

come to Zarodovo over a year ago, but no one could boast of being his friend, or even his close acquaintance. Perhaps this was because he did not wish to make friends, or perhaps people avoided him as a man not from these parts, a man with an unfamiliar Moscow accent and a higher education. He was a good agronomist. The old men valued his opinion, but when he was working out in the fields he never spoke an unnecessary word or talked about personal matters. Sometimes he would come to the club to see a film, but he would always sit with the more staid members of the kolkhoz and again talk about nothing but kolkhoz affairs. He never went visiting or invited anyone to visit him. He lived in a little room off the kolkhoz laboratory whose only furnishings were a bed, a table, and a pile of books.

When he had first come, the marriageable girls had set their caps at him: he was young, a bachelor, clever and attractive. Once Nyura Mescheryakova, on meeting him in the woods, said she had lost her way and asked him to see her home. He led her out of the woods, but then excused himself, saying he had business to attend to, and went off with such dispatch that Nyura had never forgiven him. Gradually the girls' interest in him wore off: either he was too proud to have anything to do with them, or he had a girl in town.

But Nadya Kvashnina knew more about him than the others. And it was not from the few words she and Olga exchanged with him when he came out to inspect their work in the forcing beds that she had learned this, but from a chance encounter that had taken place in the spring and had planted seeds of hope in her heart.

Nadya vividly remembered each little detail of that encounter, and tonight, as she stole glances at Pavel Semyonovich, they all came back to her. It had taken place on a Sunday, as she was coming back from market. She had left the highway and was walking down a country road, her shoes in her basket, stepping barefoot over the cool unmown grass that was still wet with dew. There was no one in sight and it was so quiet that she caught the sounds of a horse coming behind her when it was still far away. She turned round to see a light tarantass appearing and disappearing on the hills and swiftly overtaking her. When it had almost reached her she stepped aside to let it pass, and only then did she see that it was driven by the young agronomist. He stopped the horse on catching sight of her.

"Get in, Nadezhda Fedotovna," he called out. "I'll be glad of the company."

"I will—just a second," she replied, flustered by having him see her barefoot and having him call her by her first name and patronymic, and being alone with him on this deserted road.

They sat next to each other, very close together, in the narrow creaking tarantass. Pavel Semyonovich said he had been to the station to call for a package his mother had sent him. His mother, too, was an agronomist. She worked in the Kuban and at his request had sent him seeds of Kuban wheat. He spoke of his mother with respect and affection and even showed Nadya her photograph, which he carried in his inside breast pocket. Nadya was astonished to discover that this grave and unsociable agronomist had dimples just like his mother's when he laughed.

A delicate fragrance was wafted to them as they were passing a thin and swampy wood not far from their village. Pavel Semyonovich stopped the horse again.

"Shall I pick you some violets?" he asked, and without waiting for a reply he jumped down and disappeared in some hawthorn bushes. Nadya could hear his boots slushing through the water of the swamp, and she hoped he would not come back soon so that she could sit there and think about him without his knowing it.

But he did come back soon. He handed her the little bouquet and flourished the reins as he sat down beside her.

"Could anything be lovelier than northern violets?" he mused. "They look weak and defenceless on their thin stems, but they have a lot of resistance. And how modest their beauty is! And they grow in the swamp, where the other flowers have no smell at all. I wonder where they get their fragrance?"

As if embarrassed by his own effusions, he hastened to change the subject.

"They say you and your sister are the best lace-makers in the village."

"All our girls make lace," said Nadya.

"Tell me how it's done."

Nadya told him all she knew or had heard from Granny Praskovia: how skill at lace-making was handed down from generation to generation, how the lace-makers of Zarodovo had taken first prize in St. Petersburg and Paris and at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, how new patterns were invented, and what Terenti Pavlovich had said on the subject.

"Come and watch us work," added Nadya.

The agronomist did not answer. He only took a petal from one of the flowers she was holding and said, as he examined it:

"What if you were to transfer these little white stars to lace and strew them over a white background, like stars in the sky? That would be very effective it seems to me. But I imagine it would be very hard."

Before she had time to answer, the tarantass drew up at the edge of the village.

"Do come and see us," she said in parting. "We work every evening."

"Thanks, I will," said Pavel Semyonovich, and waved his hand at her as she walked away.

Nadya waited for him every evening after that. She said nothing to anyone about what had happened, not even to Olga. Not a word he had said was forgotten. But he did not come. And as if by mutual consent, they both avoided a reference to their encounter when they met in the fields.

But at last here he was, sitting in their house, listening to the accordion, smiling, whispering something into his neighbour's ear. Nadya's bobbins got out of control. Before she knew it, it was time to go home, the boys and girls were getting up noisily, and Pavel Semyonovich was standing beside her.

"Thank you," he said, glancing from Nadya to Olga. "And thank you, too, Praskovia Savvishna," he said in a different tone. "May I come and speak to you tomorrow on a very important matter?"

Those who heard these last words pricked up their ears. What business could the agronomist have with Granny Praskovia? For a moment Granny herself was taken aback, but then she said: "Be glad to see you." Olga jumped up and went out with her friends. Pavel Semyonovich went out too. But Nadya, her cheeks burning, remained sitting on the bench.

When Granny had gone to bed, Nadya went into the room she shared with her sister, opened the drawer of her bureau, took out a lace scarf and

stood gazing at it. Tiny white stars were thickly sprinkled over a white ground as delicate as gossamer. "How modest their beauty is!" she recalled Pavel Semyonovich's words. And she also recalled the sleepless hours she had spent when everyone else in the house was asleep and Olga was still out with her friends. If Olga ever knew! If she ever knew the hopes her sister had been cherishing all these months!

And now—perhaps—tomorrow?

3

But on the next day the sensation caused by the agronomist's coming to the lace-making was overshadowed by other events. First of all, the regional paper published an article criticizing the chairman of the kolkhoz and the members of the board of management for not getting in supplies of fodder in time. Secondly, the prize-winning cow Malinka calved, and everyone went to have a look at her large-browed offspring that could hardly stand on its legs. And thirdly, Anna Nikiforovna gave her daughter Panka a switching with nettles for having stayed out with Sanka Barinov until the cock crowed. The neighbours heard Panka wail:

"Oh, Mummy, Mummy, here I am a member of the Comsomol and you do this to me!"

"I have the greatest respect for Comsomol members," her mother calmly replied, "but I've always given you switchings when you needed them and I always will."

Panka came late to the forcing beds and instantly began fussing with the cabbage-sprouts, ignoring the glances and witticisms of her friends. From time to time her black curls would bob, but whether from anger or laughter no one could tell. When the girls sat down for a snack, Panka stood stiffly off to one side munching bread and a cucumber.

"Do you suppose she'll stand up to make lace too?" whispered the irrepressible Nyura Mescheryakova.

"At least I don't lose my way in a forest of two pine trees and ask somebody to see me home," retorted Panka. "The boys see me home without my asking them."

The girls burst out laughing. But Nadya heard and saw nothing. She was too much engrossed in the caprices of her heart, which at one moment threatened to stop beating, and at the next beat so wildly that it scared her.

And yet she was the first to see Granny Praskovia coming down the path towards the hotbeds. She was covering the ground in long strides, swinging her arms and muttering something to herself. With a catch of her breath, Nadya rose to meet her. But Granny did not even notice her. She went straight up to Olga and made a low bow.

"Many thanks to you, daughter," she said in a tearful voice. "Many thanks for the way you treat your old mother."

"What is it, Mother? What has happened?" asked Olga getting up, her hands clenched at her breast.

"Good people," said Granny, turning to the girls, "good people, have you ever heard of a daughter who hid the secrets of her thankless heart from her own mother, who lived a double life and kept it so dark that no one could guess it? Did you know, Nadya?" she said to her elder daughter. "Speak up, did you know?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Mother," said Nadya, feeling her knees give way beneath her.

"See, not even her elder sister knew," whimpered the old woman, then turned back to Olga and said in a changed voice: "Well, that agronomist of yours came to see us. He did indeed. Your father and I were digging potatoes, and he might as well have struck us over the head with a wagon-shaft. 'I've come to ask you, Fedot Ivanovich, and you, Praskovia Savvishna, for permission to marry your daughter Olga, says he.'"

The girls were dumbfounded. All heads turned to Olga, who was still standing there motionless, blushing painfully, her fists pressed tightly against her breast.

"That old nincompoop of mine lost his wits completely," went on Granny. "Muttered something to the effect that he had no objections but it was up to me, her mother. 'As for me,' says he, 'I'd be very glad, thank you very much.' I gave him a little push and said: 'Thank you for the honour, Pavel Semyonovich, but that's not the way we do things here. It's customary to marry off the eldest daughter first here.'"

"Oh, Mother, how shameful!" groaned Nadya.

"Not a word! It's none of your business," shouted Granny. "But he just stands there smiling and says, 'I have the greatest respect for Nadya. but it's Olga I love.' 'How can you love her if you don't know her?' says I. 'But I do know her,' says he. 'I've been courting Olga for almost a year and everything's settled between us, begging your pardon, but we didn't want anybody to know until we had your consent. I've already written to my mother,' says he—" and there was no mistaking the triumph in Granny's voice as she said this. " 'I've described Olga to her and got her consent.' 'Is Olga willing?' says I. 'Yes indeed,' he laughs. 'She and I have been in love for a long time.' And here that nincompoop of mine butts in again. 'Why all this rigmarole, old woman?' he wheezes. 'As for me, I'd be very glad, thank you very much.'"

"And you, Mother? What did you say?" breathed Olga, scarcely moving her lips.

Granny was about to shout at her—she even stamped her foot, but on catching the look in Olga's eye she choked, gave a little cough and pursed her lips. Olga buried her face in her mother's shoulder and both of them began to cry. At this the girls rushed up and drew Olga away, crowding round her and pelting her with questions.

Nadya, too, came up to congratulate her. Without a word she put her cold, dry lips on her sister's lips, and at this moment anyone could see how alike their faces, their dress, their manners were.

Granny Praskovia and Olga went home, and the girls ran back to the village to spread the news. Nadya found herself standing on the bank of the Sukhona river at a spot far away from the village when the barking of the buoy-keeper's dog brought her back to earth. As she went over in her mind all that had happened, she had no grudge against her sister or Pavel Semyonovich. She only felt pity for herself—an oppressive, humiliating pity.

The wedding was held in the autumn, when the harvest was in. Terenti Pavlovich forgot his duck-hunting long enough to honour the couple with his presence. The occasion was celebrated in the new house in which the newlyweds were to live. Granny Praskovia insisted

that a cat be the first creature to set foot in the new house, as superstition demanded, but nothing came of it, for tipsy Grandad Fedot had already sought refuge there. The board of management presented Pavel Semyonovich with a motorcycle and Olga with a Palekh sewing box.

Festivities were in full swing when Nadya arrived. She came in holding out her hands, which were covered by a dainty lace scarf. She went straight up to the young couple and bowed to them.

"My wedding present," she said, adding, as she turned to Pavel Semyonovich: "Remember our talk about violets, Pavel Semyonovich?"

Olga took the present. Her husband glanced at the lace, then at Nadya, and suddenly his face changed its expression. But at that moment Terenti Pavlovich rushed up and snatched the scarf out of Olga's hands. He held it up to the light and shook it as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Has anyone a ring?" he said.

"I have," said Panka.

"Give it to me."

He took Panka's silver and turquoise ring off her finger, slipped a corner of the scarf through it and pulled. The scarf easily passed through the ring.

"It's a marvel!" exclaimed Terenti Pavlovich. "Simply a marvel. Look at those violets—you can fairly smell them. How dainty! What exquisite workmanship! You can be sure you will be given a place at the exhibition this year, Nadya."

He went on raving until Nadya stopped him with a meaning look.

"Come over here a minute, Terenti Pavlovich," she said.

They went to a far corner.

"They say there's a lace-making school in Vologda, Terenti Pavlovich. Is that true?"

The instructor said it was.

"And will they take in new students this autumn?"

He said they would.

"Then let me be one of them. I won't disgrace you, really I won't."

Next morning Terenti Pavlovich went away, and Nadya went with him. The whole family saw them off. Granny Praskovia cried and Grandad Fedot kept shifting from one foot to the other and sighing. Pavel Semyonovich pressed Nadya's hand without saying a word. Olga kissed her sister shyly and said quite unexpectedly, even for herself: "Forgive me, sister."

The horses set off at a good pace and before they knew it the village was behind them.

Soon they came to the thin and swampy woods made memorable by her encounter in the spring. There were no violets now; they had faded long ago.

"You're a very clever man, Terenti Pavlovich," thought Nadya as she glanced at the instructor dozing beside her. "But there are lots of things you don't understand. It wasn't me who made that lace. It was my love."

Translated by Margaret Wettlin

CHETUNOV THE SON OF CHETUNOV

SERGEI Chetunov woke up, as usual, with a feeling that he was suffocating. Out here in the desert, every morning began with this sensation of stifling weight on his chest. All it meant was that the sun had had time to warm up the canvas tent-wall near which his camp-bed stood. Being a newcomer, he had been given the worst place. In a few minutes the sun would reach his tent-mates Moryagin and Struchkov. Meanwhile they slept soundly.

Chetunov's first move was to grab the canteen. Empty as usual, except for a few lukewarm drops which merely moistened his lower lip and were absorbed by his desiccated mouth, leaving a gritty feeling of sand on his teeth. His gullet hurt painfully as he gulped drily.

Chetunov stretched and unhooked the tent-flap. A puff of air, warmer but fresher than that inside the tent, flowed in and a narrow sunbeam like a white-hot wire darted to the table by Moryagin's bed. The beam dripped gold on an empty champagne bottle which had the stump of a candle stuck in its neck; it spread iridescence over the light tan of a pair of climbing-boots that stood on the table and it turned the bulging eyes of a lizard under a glass jar into a pair of silver buttons.

"Ugh, a lizard. What's that doing here?" Chetunov muttered, watching the creature with a sense of disgust as the paleskin on its throat swelled and contracted with its convulsive breathing. "It'll suffocate." And, taking a pace to Moryagin's table with the intention of setting the lizard free, he chanced to knock the edge of the table with his hand. Something tinkled and Moryagin raised a sweaty red face from his pillow.

"What's that?" he mumbled hoarsely.

"It's . . . it's the lizard," Chetunov said with embarrassment.

"Don't touch it. It's for my son." Moryagin rolled over and went to sleep again.

What a fellow, Chetunov thought as he climbed from the tent up narrow steps cut into the clay. The tent had been pitched in a pit whose sides reached about half-way up its height. Why couldn't he have given the lizard a whiff of chloroform? What nerve, snapping at him not to touch it. Really, he ought to have let it out or insisted on the man chloroforming it.

But Chetunov knew very well that he would never do anything like that; moreover, Moryagin knew that too. "There's nothing that people find out so quickly as another chap's tactfulness," Chetunov told himself.

"They know here that I'm not one to make a row. Well, today's my day and not yours, Comrade Moryagin!"

Chetunov's spirits suddenly rose and his face broke into a smile.

He was standing close to the edge of the *takyr*—a large depression whose clayey, level surface extended over many kilometres and was so criss-crossed with thin cracks, so hard and flat and whitish that it resembled parquet. Along the side of the *takyr* nearest Chetunov ran a line of half-buried tents, with several lorries, a mobile boring unit and two tractors near by.

Beyond the *takyr* stretched the desert, a limitless expanse of yellow sand. But at the edge of the *takyr* the sand was strewn with angular lumps of clay which had been blown by the wind from the hollow and baked by the sun to tile-like hardness. Some gigantic wagon loaded with clay pots might have overturned and scattered its contents there.

Sometimes this empty view, gnawed bare by the sun and the wind, made Chetunov feel lonely and homesick; but on this day he found the mournful scene less distasteful than usual. "An excellent taking-off place," he remembered the pilot saying, the day he had flown him from Ashkhabad. And it looked as if the *takyr* was going to prove a pretty good taking-off place for him, Chetunov, too.

Now that his thoughts had turned to his own good luck Chetunov gave rein to his imagination. He thought about his good luck as he washed in the cloudy earthy-smelling water that he drew from a barrel; he was still thinking of it as he polished off a tin of all-too-familiar mackerel and got ready for his journey. But, could you call it luck? That implied something fortuitous, whereas he was on his way to success with a conscious effort of will.

From early childhood, Sergei Chetunov, the son of the geologist Academician Sergei Pavlovich Chetunov, had been convinced that his life was going to be different from others' lives.

When he and other children used to play their favourite game of "What are you going to be when you grow up?" he was never beguiled by all sorts of tempting professions like becoming a composer or a deep-sea diver. His answer was always the same: "I am going to be a famous geologist," he would say with conviction. Neither he nor his family had any doubt about it. What else could he be, he the son of Chetunov? Not for him the faltering search for his path in life; not for him, either, that thrilling experience of falling in love with science, which comes to a man when finally he attains his chosen calling. Sergei Chetunov could not have said when he became enamoured of geology. It seemed to him that he had always loved it, the way he loved his mother and father, his old nurse and everything that belonged to the dear, cosy world of his childhood.

But bearing the name of Chetunov was not only an advantage; it carried with it a heavy responsibility. Sergei was an outstanding student; both at school and college his marks were excellent. Yet that surprised nobody; they took it somehow for granted. Sergei, however, felt that it was up to him to surprise people: he had no right to be like other people; he was a Chetunov. That was his motive for turning down a post-graduate scholarship which would have meant staying in Moscow and working at a quiet, settled job under Professor Markov, a pupil of his father's; instead he had left for the desert. He had noticed then what a good impression his decision had made on everybody—students and members of the teach-

ing staff and ordinary friends, too; and this acted as that moral bracer without which he would have found it terribly hard to leave home.

On reaching the expedition, however, he became merged in a world where it fell to each member's lot to do the same tedious work, to receive one's equal share of blazing sunshine and tepid muddy water. And here he once again became the same as everybody else, a fact that made him suffer agonies in his desire to show himself as unique, as Chetunov, the son of Chetunov.

To make things worse, he had, at the start, made many mistakes, mistakes so silly that he had to fight hard for the right to be considered on the same footing as the others. To this day he could not recall his blunders without a feeling of shame.

Chetunov knew that nothing was more important in the desert than water. Drinking-water had to be brought to the expedition by air. During the first few days he used to look carefully to see how much water was left in his canteen before he took a gulp. He did this surreptitiously, afraid the others would catch him at it. Later, however, he felt certain that the daily water-ration was sufficient and he stopped bothering about it. One day, however, he noticed that his companions, who were all old hands at life in the desert, were suffering from thirst; they would ask each other from time to time when the plane with the fresh water was expected and cast mean looks at Chetunov whenever he reached for his canteen. Their lack of restraint gave Chetunov a secret amusement; he went so far as to say to Moryagin, whom he took from the first day to be a petty person with whom he had no need to be on his guard as with the others:

"You should have sunk your own private well."

"It's easy for you to talk," snapped Moryagin. "You've got a full canteen. Ours have been empty since early yesterday."

What had happened was that lack of water was threatening to bring the main borer to a halt and the members of the expedition had decided to sacrifice their drinking water. All except Chetunov, who, as a newcomer, was left out. And although Chetunov felt in his heart of hearts that the decision was a just one he went to the chief and made a row about it. That was his second blunder.

The chief of the expedition, an elderly man of trenchant gesture and a handsome face whose prominent features wore a somewhat tigerish look, made on Chetunov the impression of being a grown-up man sitting at a nursery table. This man had reached a critical point in his life: he had occupied a high ministerial post before he was appointed to lead a small geographical expedition. Chetunov thought that with an experience like that the man would have found it hard to look his companions straight in the face, but, in fact, the chief's eyes not only looked at people, they pierced them—deep-set, light grey, brilliant eyes under a craggy brow, eyes that expressed kindness and severity at the same time.

The chief heard Chetunov's impassioned protest patiently, indifferently even; then he yawned widely and said: "Why all the fuss and bother? Want to rough it like the others? Good for you!"

He gave immediate orders for Chetunov's ration of water to be stopped; there were no signs that he appreciated the nobility of the young man's action.

Luckily, the plane arrived the next day. But Chetunov drew his own conclusions. He at once assumed a more modest attitude and was very

soon behaving like everybody else. He learned to go without water when that was necessary, but he never pretended that he was not thirsty; he learned when to keep quiet and when the general mood called for liveliness; how to drink tepid champagne out of a metal scoop that gave it a disgusting, tinny taste. But it was not worth coming to the desert to do that. Chetunov persevered in his search of an occasion to distinguish himself from the rest. He had to be on the look-out for the chief, who did not like upstarts. For that reason Chetunov was careful to avoid giving vent to vapid enthusiasms or sticking his neck out; he kept quiet at progress meetings. But never did he forget his main aim.

To some extent chance stepped in to help him as it always helps those who try hard enough. His father was quite right when he used to say: "In science chance is part of the established law." Not long after he had joined the expedition Chetunov noticed a dog-eared, grease-spotted map on Moryagin's table. Now, Chetunov had had a passion for maps since his childhood. A glance at the map told him that it included the territory the expedition was working on.

"Where did you get this from?" Chetunov asked.

"Oh, there were some aerogeologists working next to us and I asked them to let me have a sheet of paper for a table-cloth," replied Moryagin.

Chetunov asked Moryagin to let him have the map; he examined it carefully. The map was detailed and it gave Chetunov a complete picture of the patch of desert where he had come to live and work. And it was then that a vague thought—or, rather, the outline of a thought—flashed through his mind. Before long the thought had come out of the recesses of his mind in the form of a clear-cut and rather original idea.

In order to get more reliable seismographic data the expedition had to study the physical properties of the rock two to three hundred metres below the surface of the desert. For that purpose work was started on three deep borings. However, things went from bad to worse; there were accidents, there was not enough water. At the end of the first month the borings were only a few dozen metres deep. The chief of the expedition called an emergency meeting of overseers and workers on the boring operation.

The tent was stuffy, full of cigarette smoke. Chetunov kept hearing feeble, monotonous phrases like: "We must admit with all objectivity. . . . We must strive in a decisive way to raise productivity. . . ."

Actually, a practical suggestion would be made now and then, but nothing important. The senior foreman proposed that they should sink artesian-wells in the neighbourhood; the chief engineer wanted them to apply for new equipment. . . . The chief of the expedition kept silent, letting everyone have his say, but Chetunov noticed the whites of his eyes growing bloodshot and how after each speech he champed his jaws in a curious way that bared large yellow teeth.

"Oh, if only I could get up and shake them all with some bright idea," pondered Chetunov. Suddenly he recalled the map, recalled it with unusual clarity as if he had just been examining it. A strange tremor—the presentiment of discovery—shook his body, although the tent was suffocatingly hot. He slipped out unnoticed and ran to get the map. Yes, there it was, just as he had seen it in his mind's eye: that hollow with the depth marked—300 metres. A good map, a splendid map!

When Chetunov returned to the tent Struchkov was saying something.

The chief's jaws were working with impatience. Then Struchkov finished, shrugged his shoulders and sat down.

"May I speak, please?" Chetunov said in a loud voice. He had grown pale.

All heads swung round in his direction. The chief's eyes pierced Chetunov.

"All right, let's hear what our geologist has got to say."

For the first few words Chetunov did not hear his own voice but, nevertheless, he knew that he was expressing himself with assurance and firmness. He explained that in the desert there were places where older layers broke through the surface; he gave a brief list of all the levels into which these ancient layers were divided. By then he could hear himself speaking and he enjoyed the sound of his own voice. He deliberately used the specialized names of the strata that are to be found all over the pages of geology textbooks and, confronted with the looks of perplexity on the faces of his listeners, thought: Never mind, my friends, you'll have to get used to the vocabulary of real science.

"Couldn't you make yourself a little clearer, Comrade geologist? Keep to the point," said the chief impatiently.

"I am using the language of my branch of science," said Chetunov with equal acerbity. He was certain that he was playing a hand that he could not lose and that he was on safe ground in speaking in that manner.

"No, I am not a geophysicist, only a geologist, but I am ready to get you rock specimens larger than any you will get here from your borings."

From the silence that immediately fell on the company, Chetunov could tell that his words had made a deep effect. Taking his time, he drew the map out of his pocket and spread it on the table, moving the chief's pipe and tobacco-pouch to one side.

"You see, about one hundred kilometres away from where we are working there is a deep hollow called the Kara-Shor. Its steep sides, which are about three hundred metres deep, reveal deposits from the contemporaneous and the tertiary systems, but lower down we shall find deeper rocks of the upper cretaceous system. So I could bring from there samples of the rocks that interest us, rocks that lie at the same depth and which will show the thickness of the various strata. . . ."

The somewhat exalted, triumphant note on which Chetunov concluded fell on an icy silence. He had been expecting an explosion. Why, they just haven't understood me, he thought in confusion. He felt vexed with the geophysicists.

"I see," said the chief, his eyes gleaming. "We'll be able to test those samples for density, magnetic properties, electro-conductivity, and use the data in our calculations about the depth. How much time do you need for this?" His manner was different now, precise and business-like.

"One day, if you give me the plane," Chetunov answered in a similar tone.

"Agreed." The chief slammed his hand on the table, rose to his feet and, looking round the tent, said quite cheerfully: "How do you like that? Real Chetunov style, eh?"

With these words he at once elevated Chetunov to the position he deserved. Chetunov was no longer one of those young, pitifully inexperienced specialists among whom, apparently, he had been included. He became Chetunov, the son of Chetunov.

Now, drawing near to the chief's tent, Chetunov felt a pleasant sense of relief as he recalled his previous timidity in the presence of this man.

"Come in, please," he heard a quiet, authoritative voice say from within.

Chetunov entered. The chief stood in the middle of the tent, his short, powerful legs planted widely apart. Stylish military boots, pale-grey gabardine riding-breeches and a snow-white silk shirt gave his appearance an elegance that reawakened Chetunov's previous antagonism. Why, the man was dressed as if he expected to be sent for by Moscow any minute. But this involuntary thought only flashed through his mind and did not detract from the favourable impression now made on Chetunov by the sturdy, thick-set frame that leaned a little forward, the grizzled head, glittering like a silver-fox fur, and those remarkable eyes whose look was at once kindly and severe.

"Take a seat, Chetunov," the chief said, sitting down.

"Thanks," said Chetunov, but he remained standing.

"Ha, in a hurry to leave?" said the chief. His swift, gripping look seemed to draw Chetunov into the depths of his small keen eyes, and Chetunov realized that he was being scrutinized, weighed up and probed as he stood there in his canvas shirt with its two small pockets, his loose-fitting trousers, his broad belt with canteen dangling from it, his climbing-boots.

"Got your map?" asked the chief.

Chetunov patted the celluloid cover of his map-case.

"I can see you've got it in your blood," the chief said, again giving the name of Chetunov its due. He got to his feet. "All right. Good luck to you. Only promise me you'll not take any risks."

"No risks, then. That's agreed."

They shook hands warmly.

Chetunov walked lightly out of the tent and went towards the place where the plane awaited him. The whole camp was now awake. A lorry loaded with rattling empty barrels overtook Chetunov, its wheels raising thick clouds of dust. Gusts of air sweeping the ground twisted the dust into whirlwinds, and Chetunov knew that unless the wind dropped, it would only be an hour or two before the camp was covered with a heavy layer of yellow dust.

Moryagin came out of the tent, stretched lazily and went towards the water barrel. He was followed by Struchkov wearing a cotton suit and a floppy white felt hat. Stooping as usual he made for the borings. Early morning activities were in evidence at the other tents, too: people were washing and shaving and opening tins of food. As he looked at all these bustling figures Chetunov suddenly felt with the utmost acuteness that he was a man set apart from others, a man always able to make himself a master of circumstances. It was no mere chance that on this day, which the others were starting like any other day he, Chetunov, the youngest of them all, had an aeroplane waiting to take him on an important, interesting mission—a special mission.

And, sure enough, there was the plane and its pilot. The plane was an old-timer on the job, its metal parts dark, its fuselage a nondescript colour. Kozitsin, the pilot, whom Chetunov had met a few times before, looked as much a desert-veteran as the plane itself; his hair, his eyebrows, even his eyelashes were bleached, his face was sunburned almost to blackness.

The look that Kozitsin gave Chetunov was frank but so searching and appraising that Chetunov felt annoyed. Why, he's looking at me as if he thought I were a forged bank-note, he thought.

"Looks as if we'll have to fly," said Kozitsin, and laughed at his own joke.

"Yes, it looks like it," Chetunov answered, making his voice sound deliberately droll.

"As a rule we go on desert trips in pairs," Kozitsin continued. "But my mate's busy bringing water." He laughed again.

What was the point of all this talk, wondered Chetunov. Was Kozitsin testing his state of mind?

However, the faint feeling of dislike that the pilot aroused in him served somehow to convince Chetunov that Kozitsin was a man to be relied on.

The fierce roar of the engine, the rush of air so pleasantly cool on the face, the sensation that the earth was racing away from one—all this stirred Chetunov and made him feel strong and purified, ready to perform great deeds.

The plane climbed steeply. Before long the huge takyr was no more than a splash of mud on the grey corrugated expanse of the desert. Chetunov, who was far from being enchanted by his life at this place and who was quite indifferent about his tent-mates, now felt a twinge of warm affection for the patch of earth that he was leaving behind him.

Down below there moved a drab-yellow smoothness with occasional ridges of sandy hillocks, sometimes covered with saxaul shrubs. The rim of the desert seemed to turn upwards so that the plane might have been suspended over a gigantic bowl. In this way a little less than an hour passed; then Chetunov suddenly noticed that they were flying over a lake surrounded by steep banks and covered with dazzlingly white and in places even bluish snow. At that moment the lake tilted, the plane began to lose height rapidly, and Chetunov realized that what he had taken to be a lake was in fact the dried up salt-lake of Kara-Shor.

Chetunov gazed eagerly downwards and found it hard to believe that this really was a dried up lake, so closely did the central area resemble a real lake with a coating of snow on its frozen surface. He had never before seen anything so completely lifeless as this great steep-sided cavity like a dead crater on the Moon. And for the first time that day the feeling stirred in him that it would be good when he had rid himself of this place.

Kozitsin landed the plane near the edge of the dry lake.

"A funny name to give this place—Kara-Shor," said Chetunov, clambering after Kozitsin out of the plane. "It doesn't look black at all from the air. White as snow."

"I don't think 'kara' means black in this case. More likely 'bad' or 'perilous,'" said Kozitsin calmly. "It really is a perilous place. Clay and salt. Try and land on that surface down there and you'd have the salt up to your wings. It would be interesting to know, though, Comrade Chetunov, how this cavity was formed. Was it an earthquake or something?"

"No," Chetunov replied readily. "It had nothing to do with an earthquake. Naturally, the movement of the earth's crust played a certain part, but it is generally assumed that these craters were formed by the dissolving of limestone in water. To begin with the cavities were quite small, then they joined and became larger and deeper."

"But where did the water come from?"

"There was a prehistoric sea here. All the land that you can see from here was covered with water. . . ." Chetunov felt a sudden urge to share with this frank, inquisitive young man all that he knew about the desert. Yet, as a rule, he did not like explaining things in simple terms. Why was he being so talkative? Was he trying to spin out time?

"Yes, there was a sea here . . ." he said aloud, but dully now. "Well, that's enough talk. I must get to work."

"Can I be of any help?" asked Kozitsin.

"Help? No, thanks, there's nothing for you to do. You had better see that the plane isn't blown away."

Chetunov spoke jokingly; he wanted to show Kozitsin that the work ahead caused him no concern. But the pilot took his words quite seriously.

"That happens sometimes. But don't worry. I've noticed some heavy boulders that I'll tie the plane up to. The wind won't shift it then."

"H'm, we'd be in a pretty pickle if it did," Chetunov muttered wryly and, pulling his cap down more firmly, walked to the edge of the cliff.

On his way he turned several times to wave to Kozitsin; then he thought that this might make the pilot think that he was feeling a bit rattled, so he forced himself not to glance back. When, at length, after having covered a fair distance, he did look round, Kozitsin was out of sight and the plane was a tiny dark mark on the sand, like a beetle. Soon it was not there at all—the sand seemed to have swallowed it up—and Chetunov was alone.

A feeling compounded of melancholy and rapture possessed him. He had the impression of looking down on himself from a height, seeing himself as a small fearless figure stubbornly mastering this expanse of blazing-hot deadness. There was something extraordinarily poetic in the idea that young Chetunov, the son of Academician Chetunov—the young warrior grasping the sword from the hand of his aged sire—should be setting out in single combat with the unknown.

Chetunov approached a crevasse which wound down to the depths of the salt-lake. At first the descent was fairly smooth as he was walking on clay but farther down the rocks became denser, projecting to form steps in a giant's stairway, grey, greenish, red. Marl or limestone, noted Chetunov. What was it his father had written? "The beautiful naked forms of rock are dear to the heart of every geologist." As if he were speaking of women, thought Chetunov, chuckling to himself. Actually, his father had not been much interested in women; geology was his one and only love. That was probably true of every great scientist. Was it true of him?

Chetunov did not find that line of thought agreeable, and he turned to another. What if he should stumble into something unusual—some small thing that would mean nothing to eyes less sharp than his? He would pick up that unimportant little thing and the result would be a brilliant new theory about the formation of these huge limestone craters. First there would be a brief news item in the newspapers, the importance of which would be lost on all but the chosen few; then would come a paper read to a scientific society, a thesis—no more than a thin notebook in length, like Einstein's famous work—but enough to obtain for him the title of D.Sc. . . .

While indulging in these pleasant dreams, Chetunov did not neglect his work. He took out of his haversack a notebook, a hammer and a metal tape-measure; he adjusted his haversack on his back again so that

it would not get in his way; then he continued his descent. As he went, he measured the thickness of rock-layers and sketched with brief notes all the strata he intersected. He decided to leave the collection of specimens for the return journey, after he had made himself thoroughly acquainted with the rock-layers.

The sun was now high and baking hot; after an hour's intensive work Chetunov's sweat-soaked shirt felt as stiff as tarpaulin; under his cap his scalp was wet and hot. There was not the slightest cover from the blazing sun, nothing but a narrow strip of shade at the feet of the highest ledges in the great staircase of rock.

Chetunov reached for his canteen. It felt very small and light at his waist. I mustn't, he said to himself sternly, and at once felt terribly thirsty. Funny, a moment before he had not wanted to drink at all; he had only to think of water for that awful longing for water to start. No, I won't drink, he bade himself firmly and simply, and was delighted to discover that he could hold out. This gave him a new sense of self-respect: he could be tough with himself, he could deal mercilessly with his failings. How right his father had been to say that without those qualities you could not be a real geological prospector. Well, now that he had tested himself there was no great harm in taking just one sip. When the time came for real privations he would know how to do without water altogether. He tugged the stopper out and took a deep draught. The water was cooling. Chetunov felt greatly refreshed.

Now he set to work with keen energy. The descent grew increasingly difficult but the element of risk appealed to his strong pliant young body. He worked without a thought for his safety. True, it was routine work of the sort that hundreds of geologists do every day, dangerous work. But it was just that which made it such splendid work. Now Chetunov was finding poetry not in some accidental, easy achievement but in the knowledge that he was one of thousands of modest, anonymous workers. Yes, he was going to be a rank-and-file prospecting geologist. Sunburned, wind-tanned, he would go unnoticed along his way through life, the real value of his simple achievements known but to a few close friends. And only in his old age, when his life was drawing to its close, would he bequeath his vast experience to science and a fine, sad, belated glory would crown the last days of his life. . . .

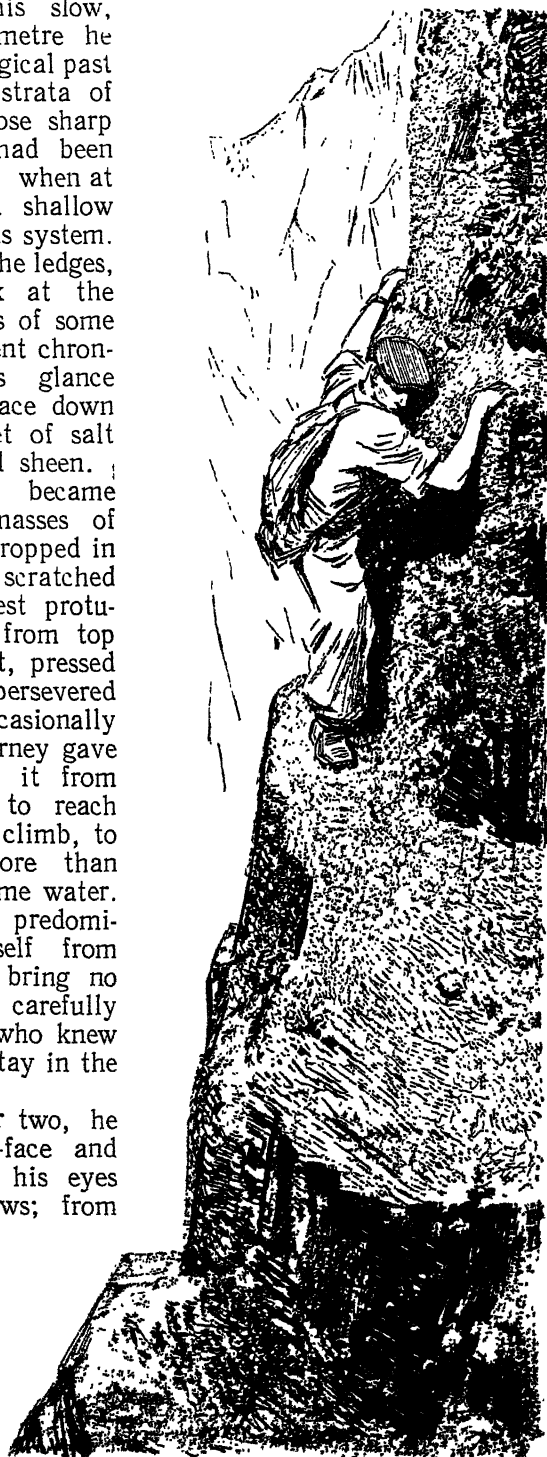
Chetunov drew the sleeve of his jacket across his eyes. He was standing on a steep ledge about five metres high. Not without difficulty, and bruising his hands and elbows in the process, he lowered himself from the ledge. As he sat resting below it, he thought what a mistake he had made to turn down Kozitsin's offer of help. It would have been far easier to get down the cliff with the help of a rope. It was the fault of his vanity once more—the desire to do everything on his own. Really, he would have to root out all such trivial, petty feelings. He would have to be strong and straightforward—that was the way for him to live. . . .

Judging from his calculations he must have climbed down over two hundred metres by now. That meant he was nearer the bottom of the cavity than the top of the cliff. Chetunov glanced up and felt an involuntary stab of fear: the cliff-face he had descended looked vertical from where he now was. How on earth was he going to climb up again? With a full haversack, what was more. Well, it was early to be thinking of that—if he could climb down he would, be able to climb up again. . . .

Chetunov continued on his slow, dangerous way. With each metre he plunged deeper into the geological past of the Earth. The speckly strata of marl and red limestone whose sharp edges scratched his hands had been formed millions of years ago when at this place there had been a shallow but wide sea of the cretaceous system. As he sat resting on one of the ledges, Chetunov took a close look at the stratum. As from the pages of some great book he read the ancient chronicles of the Earth. His glance took in the rest of the cliff-face down to its foot where the carpet of salt shimmered with a pale, dead sheen.

Lower down, the way became still more difficult. Solid masses of grey and roseate limestone dropped in almost vertical ledges. His scratched hands clinging to the smallest protuberances, his body covered from top to toe with a fine pink dust, pressed close to the rock, Chetunov persevered on his gradual progress. Occasionally the thought of the return journey gave him a twinge, but he drove it from his mind; he wanted only to reach the end of this ordeal of a climb, to stretch his body and, more than anything else, to drink some water. The wish to drink was now predominant, but he forbade himself from indulging it. One sip would bring no real relief and he had to go carefully with his water supply; for who knew how long he would have to stay in the salt-lake.

When, for a second or two, he looked away from the cliff-face and glanced up, the sun pierced his eyes with blindingly white arrows; from the baking rock came gusts of hot air as if from the open furnace of a locomotive. At last Chetunov's right foot groped uncertainly on a level surface. He lowered his other foot, hesitated a moment, and then freed his hands off the ledge of rock



he had been clinging to. Yes, he had a firm footing on the solid bottom of the salt-lake; his 300-metre descent was over.

To his surprise, he found that the surface of the salt-lake, which, from above, had seemed so smooth and level in its dazzling whiteness, was, in reality, broken up into a mass of polygon-shaped cakes of salt, large and small, and not armour-hard like the bed of the takyr but soft and spongy, like asphalt in the sun. The salt-layer was quite thin, and through it he could see dark grey clay from which a steamy, stuffy heat rose.

This was no cosy corner. Chetunov smiled faintly and his eyes moved involuntarily to the place where, at a dizzy height, towered the wavy line of the golden-veiled inaccessible cliff top. Inaccessible was the word; no doubt about that now. That meant he would have to find some easier way up. But did such a way exist?

"Of course, it must exist," Chetunov said aloud, and felt frightened at the sound of his own voice which had a strange ring in the dead silence of the salt-lake. And this short shock of fear was followed by a feeling of real, serious fright.

Now the desire to rest had deserted him and his body was impatient for action. He took a few swigs at his canteen, gulping down the tepid liquid, and walked quickly along the foot of the cliff. Turning a small headland that jutted out into the salt-lake, he saw that beyond it the wall of rock continued to rise in an almost vertical conglomeration of various thicknesses, without a sign of any crevasses in it. Without the assistance of ropes and wedges there was not the slightest chance of climbing up. The thought that he had fallen into a trap caused Chetunov's parched lips to twist in a wry smile.

The excitement of work that had held him in its grip during the descent had evaporated without leaving a trace; in its place was a gnawing sense of alarm. Perhaps he was walking in the wrong direction. Perhaps the eastern side of the salt-lake was less steep than the western. And although there were not the least grounds for this supposition, he grasped at it and hurried back.

Some time later, when he had walked about a kilometre past the place where he had first reached the level of the lake, he suddenly recalled that he had promised the geophysicists a full description of the strata. But how was he going to do that now? If he were to climb the cliff by a different route than the one he had come down, the strata would be different from those he had only just measured. What a mess! But when he took a careful look at the walls of the "dead sea" Chetunov noticed that the variegated bands of rock lay around it in strictly horizontal lines with no change either in tone or thickness, that is to say, in composition. It followed that wherever he took specimens he could always show on his sketch the strata to which they belonged. So it did not matter where he took his samples; his sketch would always serve to show the strata they belonged to. Lucky these were marine deposits!

At this stage another alarming thought damped the brief satisfaction he obtained from his modest discovery. If the rock layers were of equal thickness and capacity, it meant that the whole of the great crater was surrounded by equally inaccessible sides. Wherever he went he was going to be confronted with the same unscalable walls.

What was to be done? He could not even let Kozitsin know the fix he was in; the projecting rocks prevented the pilot from seeing how he was

wandering about on the salt-lake. What if he should try to keep to the middle of the lake? There was danger there. Kozitsin himself had warned him that it was really swampy out there.

Steady now, steady! He was not going to perish, after all. The plane was at his elbow, so to speak, and the camp only an hour's flying-time away. No real cause for alarm; it was all a game of nerves. He'd have to use his brains and work out a plan of action. . . .

He would make his way along the edge, keeping his eyes open for a possible way up. If he didn't find one, he would return to his original starting-place and try to climb back the way he had come. If that was no good, he'd manage somehow to get to the middle of the lake and give a distress signal; wave his shirt, wave it for six hours if necessary. And if that didn't help he would simply wait to be rescued. After all, Kozitsin would be sure to look for him when he didn't return: he was a reliable chap, not one to abandon a man in distress. At the very worst, Kozitsin would have to fly back to the camp for help. That would mean spending a night on the salt-lake. Well, what of that?

But to counterbalance these sober thoughts his over-heated imagination obligingly conjured up hideous scenes of his own death: he got sun-stroke, he sank into the clayey marsh, the wind carried away the plane. He recalled how someone had told him that a lizard, deprived of the possibilities of moving, dies in a matter of minutes under such a sun. A man, of course, would last longer than a lizard: if he were to collapse, his death agonies would last at least three or four hours. Anything could happen in the desert. The words kept drumming in his mind. He dismissed them, afraid of that streak of weakness that he used to suspect vaguely of lying somewhere in his nature but in which he really did not believe.

To drive away these thoughts he switched his mind on to the people who unwittingly got him into this fix. Now he understood why it had always seemed to him that his father was never quite frank in talking about his travels; not only his father, for that matter—all those famous globe-trotters deliberately or unconsciously kept secret little things they were ashamed of that had probably happened to them on their expeditions. After all, who likes to talk about his failings once the job is finished?

Chetunov took a curious delight in these angry, unjust thoughts, as though vindicating in advance his behaviour in some dire straits where he would have to take a decisive step, though now he had no idea what that behaviour would be.

The sun stood at its zenith, white-hot, all but colourless, and each time that Chetunov looked at it he for some reason lost his trust in his watch; he had to keep his eyes closed for a few seconds. Then he saw before his closed eyes a blood-red shroud with a bright blue hole in the middle of it, like a bullet-hole in a sheet of glass. Sticky saliva filled his mouth, the skin of his face and hands itched and smarted from sunburn and the irritation of tiny particles of salt and lime. The hot, still air wrapped his body in a stifling cocoon.

The desert has a strange property: it makes up for its emptiness and silence with a multitude of phantoms that haunt the lonely traveller. Before Chetunov's eyes there rose the shifting ephemeral outlines of white buildings, his ears caught the strains of mysterious delicate music or the deep throbbing of bells. Sometimes he thought he heard the murmur of flowing water and his thirst grew still more intense. Several times his hand

reached for his canteen; its faded cloth cover was so hot that it burned his skin. Finally, he carefully wrapped the canteen in his specimen-bag and put it away deep in his haversack.

These actions evoked an intolerable sense of self-pity in Chetunov. He wandered slowly on; over the grey cracked clay slid his pale, transparent, attenuated shadow. His mind played with the fancy that the sun was shining through his body as if it were made of glass and that his shadow was shrinking, growing paler and was about to disappear altogether. "Mine is the fate of Peter Schleimüller, the poor fellow who lost his shadow," Chetunov muttered to himself, suddenly reminded of his father's library where he used to spend hours poring over books. How splendid and peaceful it had been in those days to dream of future feats and discoveries, about a dazzling and unusual career.

He was not a coward in the usual sense of the word; Chetunov reflected as he walked along the edge of a headland whose semicircular mass concealed the farther reaches of the cavity. He was not afraid to lay down his life in some great cause. But to die in this stinking hole, to die before he had achieved anything in life, bearing away with him a whole world of unrealized possibilities, that was too much! Of course, had he been a mere nobody. . . . But he was not the kind to pass through life without leaving his mark on it. If he survived this ordeal he would write a book about the desert, the like of which had never been written before. That book couldn't, mustn't be lost. . . .

Chetunov reached the tip of the headland and before his weary eyes there spread the same monotonous, melancholy, grim landscape: the steep multi-layered cliff and below it the gleaming surface of the salt-lake receding into the distance. Only in the hazy blue far away did the wall of rock make a turn and just there, where the line broke, he could make out what looked like crevasses. Fearing disappointment, he heaved a heavy sigh and made a mental calculation of the distance: eight to ten kilometres, no less.

Even if he extricated himself from this place he would not reach the plane before darkness fell. And before then Kozitsin would have made up his mind that some accident had befallen him and would have flown back to the camp for help. Either way he would have to spend the night in the desert without food, without a drop of water. But all that was mere fantasy intended to weaken the impact of the blow should it turn out that those distant crevasses did not help him to reach the top.

Once again he was walking along the steep banks of the dead lake, his boots slipping on the slippery clay or bumping heavily against the hard fragments that had fallen from above. His throat was tortured by thirst, a coarse film furred his mouth, and he could find no saliva to get rid of that disgusting film; he tried not to think that there might still be a few drops of water on the bottom of his canteen.

It took Chetunov over three hours to reach the first crevasse. The muscles in his tired feet ached and throbbed, his head felt swollen and racked with pain.

Chetunov covered the last hundred metres as if in a trance, stopping from time to time and looking around helplessly, as if searching for something. "No, no," he whispered. "I'll get there first. Then I'll drink. Then I'll drink . . . drink . . . a drink of water . . . water. . . ."

He reached his objective and sank on to a stone. He did not even spare

a glance for the crevasse that spelled freedom; he reached with trembling hand for the canteen, jerked out the stopper and glued his lips to the mouth. He did not notice the first gulp, did not taste the water, but the second he let filter through his lips slowly and relished like a precious wine and the third he retained in his mouth until the liquid seemed to have evaporated of itself. He would like to have taken another sip but the canteen was empty.

Rising to his feet with difficulty, Chetunov walked to the foot of a narrow twisting crevasse which ran in a complicated course upwards. Then, as if remembering something, he removed his haversack, laid in it all his equipment, strapped it firmly on to his back again and began to scramble up the slightly slanting stone face. At the height of about ten metres his way was barred by a projecting piece of bluish-grey limestone. Chetunov sank back on to a narrow ledge. He sat quite motionless, his eyes shut, his mind a complete blank. He felt nothing except a sense of utter weariness of spirit. Then gradually the thought intruded into his mind: there was another crevasse.

He did not even climb down; he simply slid helplessly, scratching his elbows and back. From the distance the second fissure had seemed to be quite near to the first; in fact they were a good kilometre apart, a kilometre that it took Chetunov nearly an hour to cover. This second crevasse was somewhat wider than the first, reminding him of the one he had descended to reach the surface of the lake. And although he now had some experience of the deceptive character of these crevasses, Chetunov, as if defying someone who was keeping him in this accursed stone trap, shouted at the top of his voice: "I'll get out of here!"

Without any difficulty he covered the first few metres; then the ascent became steeper and his footing became insecure. He whipped off his boots. The hot stones hurt his feet through the thin woollen socks he wore, but now he could use his feet like hands and he felt surprisingly light. Chetunov laughed, delighted by this feeling of buoyancy. But suddenly a pang of alarm replaced his sense of relief. He realized that the lightness was partly caused by the emptiness of the haversack on his back.

The rock-specimens?

Preoccupied with the single aim of extricating himself from the trap into which he had fallen, he had forgotten all about the specimens. But how the devil could he be expected to get specimens? How was he going to get up that cliff with a full haversack?

In his mind's eye he saw the sharp-featured face of the chief of the expedition. What a shrimp of a man he seemed from here! Could he, a Chetunov, take such a man seriously? Chetunov uttered a hoarse laugh. But thinking about the chief he found that willy-nilly the image of the man grew plainer and plainer in his imagination; he saw the strong, stumpy frame that always seemed to be leaning forward a little, the authoritative gestures, the eyes at once kindly and severe, and against his will this image once again asserted a curious power over him. To free himself of that power Chetunov thought angrily: What a wonderful chief, sending an inexperienced man to almost certain death without batting an eyelid. But then, what was Chetunov to him, what, indeed, was the whole expedition? Just a starting-off point for a new career. Well, he wasn't going to sacrifice himself for that kind of chief. He would have to look elsewhere for people fool enough to do that.

But the feeling of relief did not come and Chetunov turned to other thoughts. The years would pass—not many of them, maybe—and he would be back in Moscow, in his comfortable, well-ordered home, and he would recall his present mishaps which, from that distance, would seem insignificant. And stirred by this vision of a cosy future he thought of a joke to store away in his mind. No, the career of a desert hermit is not for me.

He had to get away from this perilous cavity, away from the desert, away from this terrible sun, and from these exacting, ruthless people. But his movements were now becoming painfully slow as if some invisible burden lay on his shoulders. Somewhere, in the depth of his being, stirred the horrible feeling that he would never be free of this accursed desert. Of course, sooner or later he would be physically free of it, but it would haunt him all the way to Moscow, into his parents' house, into his mother's heart. He himself would be able to come to terms with all the shame and the unpleasantness that he would bring from the desert, but for everyone else he would be branded for ever.

Oh, to hell with them all! Chetunov groaned in mortal despair and sank down on to a stony ledge.

He felt as if a multitude of invisible beings were clutching at him and preventing him from breaking free. He vaguely distinguished among them the companions of his student years, his teachers, two or three of his closest women friends, and, clearer than all, his father and mother. All of them seemed to want him to perish in this damned oven. Well, it was like his father who was not used to sparing himself. But his mother! What was she doing among them?

"Well, you should have brought me up the right way," he cried feebly at his parents. A spasm of sobbing contracted his throat painfully, but the tears did not come, the sun had dried them up, and he felt as if he were swallowing gravel. Surely there was just one person in the world with whom he could be himself? Someone who would love you for what you were, not for what he or she imagined you to be. Even his mother—he saw that now quite clearly—even his mother loved an imaginary person. How marvellous it would have been had he found a woman who would know all about him, all, even the worst side, all that he kept concealed, and who would love him none the less, because she would also know that other noble, valuable side of his being. He suddenly imagined that wonderful, generous-hearted woman—kind, intelligent and boundlessly devoted—imagined her so clearly that for a moment she seemed to be at his side. But the moment passed and around him all was as before: rock, blazing heat, emptiness. Chetunov got up; submissively, despairingly, helplessly, he slid down to the surface of the lake. . . .

Reaching the foot of the slope he slipped off his haversack, removed from it a hammer, and, stooping to the foot of the cliff, knocked a piece of white limestone out of the lowest level. On the rock he scratched the figure 1 and made a sign on his sketch. At fifteen metres, where he crossed a stratum of red limestone, he repeated this process. It became increasingly difficult to make headway but Chetunov perseveringly went on extracting his specimens and packing them in his bag until his heart was convulsed with a spasm of fatigue. He sat down, wiped the grimy sweat from his face and only then saw that he was perched over an abyss. Scores of pulses at once began to throb in his body but it was no more than an automatic reaction to danger.

Well, if he was meant to fall, fall he would, thought Chetunov, and stood up. Aware of the chasm that yawned a few inches from his heels, he began to hack away pieces of pinkish-white limestone. The small, sharp-angled lumps did not yield to the blows of his hammer; he was able to extract only two tiny specimens. Savagely he took out a chisel and started prizing a large piece of rock out of the cliff-face.

Then he crept farther up. The heat scorched his face, blinded his eyes; his parched mouth was reluctant to take in the hot dusty air, his heavy bag weighed him down, but stubbornly, metre after metre, Chetunov traversed the steepest and most difficult part of the ascent. The instinct of self-preservation drew him on almost like a wise guide, suggesting where to place his foot, which projection to clutch hold of, where to creep on all-fours and where to walk naturally, where to risk a jump and where to break into a run, his toes scarcely touching the loose uncertain ground. His brain seemed to play no part in this struggle for life. And in the same unconscious way, Chetunov went on cutting out his specimens, marking them and packing them away in his bag; and when, finally, he stepped on to the level surface he felt neither surprise nor joy, as if he had always been quite certain that that was the way it had to finish. He felt only dead tiredness and the pains in his bruised, torn, burned feet and the weight of the full haversack dragging him down.

Dropping the haversack to the ground, Chetunov lay on the very edge of the cliff and gazed down indifferently at the fearful way he had just climbed. Not far from where he lay the salt-lake ran through narrow straits into another cavity that stretched to the horizon. And Chetunov, who remembered Moryagin's map well, noticed that it was inaccurate in one respect: on the map the straits were shown as being quite short, whereas, in fact, they formed a corridor of stone some half-kilometre in length. Probably it was because of this error in the rough map that the aero-geologists had given it to Moryagin.

The thought that someone else had made a mistake cheered Chetunov up. He rose to his feet and started rubbing his stiff calves. Suddenly he heard the hum of an aeroplane engine. The plane flew so low over the edge of the crater that Chetunov involuntarily ducked. So Kozitsin had found him after all! This was an unexpected stroke of luck; yet Chetunov felt more vexed than glad. He did not feel at all like meeting Kozitsin just now and having to feel the pilot's keen searching look.

He was sure to ask what had happened to his boots, Chetunov thought as he watched the plane approaching. He was so angry at having to give an account of himself to another person that he all but missed hearing Kozitsin's first words. The pilot seemed to be delighted about something, probably because he had found Chetunov so easily, but the other's joy only irritated Chetunov.

"What have you done with your boots?" asked Kozitsin.

"I took them off. They didn't suit me, you see," Chetunov said through his clenched teeth.

Kozitsin's brows shot up. He looked at Chetunov half with pity, half with curiosity. It was not the first time that he had seen people take the great endurance test of the desert, and he knew how hard a test it was for some of them. He had often flown youngsters who on their way to some remote part of the desert were full of bounce and bubbling over with high spirits and naïveté, only to meet them for their return journey as subdued,

modest people. Such transformations of character did not bother him, for he knew that they were a stage towards maturity and that the beaten look would go and be forgotten while courage and newly-acquired knowledge would remain for ever.

But this fellow's manner was not to his liking. He did not like that harrowed appearance, the bare dirty feet showing through the torn socks, the shameless "stripped" look which reminded him of a deserter. He did not like the vacant yet secretive look in Chetunov's eyes and the fact that he had nothing to say to him when they met. Had he really been through such an ordeal and found out too much about himself during his wanderings down there?

"A bit too highly seasoned for your taste down there on the salt, eh?" said the pilot. "Like a drink?"

"A drink . . ." Chetunov said in an absent manner. All the time he had been waiting for something from Kozitsin, something he did not know what but which he sensed to be a presentiment of danger. But when he heard the word "drink" spoken first by the pilot and then by himself, his hand automatically went to his canteen. The look of surprise on Kozitsin's face reminded him that the canteen was probably empty and he would have dropped it had he not heard something splashing inside. Incredible, he raised the canteen to his lips; a few warm drops fell on to his tongue. He just could not understand where the drops came from.

"What, have you got some water left?"

For the first time Chetunov detected a note of pleasure in the pilot's voice; then the point of the question struck him. His answer came simply and easily; it might have been lying on the tip of his tongue.

"Had to keep a little. Iron rations, you know."

This unexpected falsehood steadied him. And when Kozitsin brought a thermos-flask from the plane and, grasping it with both hands, handed it deferentially to Chetunov, the latter thought: "Oh yes, he is beginning to have some respect for me now."

And, indeed, Kozitsin was beginning to respect Chetunov. Himself a man of frank, manly nature he saw the good, the strong points of others more readily than the bad, mean sides of their character. When he picked up from the ground Chetunov's heavy haversack full of specimens he felt slightly guilty in his attitude to this man, who, tired and tormented as he looked, had fulfilled his difficult task well. And quite incidentally, merely to conceal his embarrassment, he started to tell Chetunov the story of a lorry-driver who got lost in the desert. Deciding that all was up with him, the driver wrote with indelible pencil on the back of his hand: "Farewell, Mother, farewell, Wife." Next morning, when he was spotted from the air, he felt really ashamed. . . .

"I mention that," added Kozitsin, who felt that his story had not gone down very well, "to show that we never leave a fellow stranded."

He stole a glance at Chetunov, but the face he saw wore only polite indifference. Chetunov was, in fact, listening with one ear only. The moment he had stopped being afraid, he felt strangely hollow—a feeling he had never experienced before—as if he was all burned up like the desert.

When he had taken his seat in the plane he suddenly found himself thinking of the pilot's story. That lorry-driver had been willing to sign the confession of his weakness. But nobody except himself knew what had happened.

This thought remained lodged in his mind for a long time, but he felt no relief from it.

Perhaps it was really quite a good thing that he felt so bad now, he thought. Who knows how a man's character is formed? But that feeling of inner vacuum did not allow him to find words to express his ideas, and Chetunov stopped thinking. For a spell he stared at the nape of Kozitsin's neck. The pilot's round head, encased in its leather helmet, reminded him of a football. At length, Chetunov slipped off to sleep without noticing it; not even the landing awakened him. Kozitsin ran from the plane and came back with a pail of water, clean socks and shirt, and only then did he wake Chetunov up.

"Thanks, thanks . . ." mumbled Chetunov and climbed out of the plane.

The day's events at once flashed through his mind; now, however, they had lost some of their sharpness. Among the students he had known at college there had been one who had served in the Patriotic War and had a shell splinter lodged just under his heart. This student used to say that the splinter never bothered him although he was always aware of its presence. Only when the student made careless, sudden gestures did the splinter make itself felt by sharp stabbing pains.

That was how it was going to be with him, thought Chetunov. Let the pain make itself felt; it certainly ought not to disappear without leaving a trace. But he was alive and he wanted to live.

He splashed himself with pleasure in the cold water, washed his feet and put on the socks and boots that Kozitsin had brought him. As he combed his hair in front of a small mirror, he noted with pleasure that his face, by becoming darker and slightly more bony, looked firmer and more expressive. And, now quite emboldened, he said to Kozitsin:

"I'll go and report to the chief. I'll let you have the shirt and other things tomorrow. . . ."

But as he approached the tent of the chief of the expedition he suddenly felt a wave of irritation against this well-groomed, self-confident, imposing man who would never be able to appreciate fully what he, Chetunov, had done, simply because he was not interested in the better side of his nature. He could imagine what the chief would say. "Well, done the job?"

And so, acting on an unconscious impulse to reward himself for what had really happened but of which he could not speak, or with the desire to surprise the chief, or, perhaps, because the sector on the map that he had found at such heavy cost seemed to him far too minute, Chetunov decided to tell a small, harmless lie. When he laid his finger on the map to show the region he had surveyed, he moved it casually to take in a part of the second cavity.

"Ah, so you were in the second one too?" asked the chief.

"Yes," said Chetunov with a nod, and added, hurriedly: "There is a slight inaccuracy in the map here. The straits are really like a long corridor."

"I see. Most interesting," the chief of the expedition said approvingly. "Let's get it quite right: you tell me you went from this point to the end of the cavity, then through the straits into the second cavity up to here. Right?" He picked up a pencil, traced a faint line along the route that Chetunov had taken and continued it along the route he had pretended to have taken.

Chetunov did not like that. This pencilled line somehow made the falsehood bigger. Why on earth was the chief interested in that second cavity? You'd think it was all that mattered.

"Then what made you come back to the first cavity?" the chief enquired searchingly.

"I had to, that's all," Chetunov replied, rudely and impatiently.

He went on with his report, interrupted now and again by the chief's questions. The farther he got, the terser were Chetunov's replies. He felt that the chief was trying to trap him. Perhaps he sensed that he was keeping something back. Perhaps there were gaps in his answers that he was not noticing himself. If only he had not told that lie about the second cavity, everything would have been perfect.

Chetunov's spirits sank lower and lower but the chief did not seem to notice that. Having exhausted all his questions he showered words of praise on Chetunov, adding that he would be formally thanked in the day's orders—all of which left Chetunov quite unmoved. He detected in himself a peculiar feeling; he had the impression that he was being praised not for what he had really accomplished but for his fictitious survey of the second cavity. And though this was not true, he felt suddenly convinced that he had not accomplished his main mission. The careless lie had, in some curious way, depreciated the value of his work in his own eyes.

When Chetunov left the chief's tent it was already dusk; the sunset drew green, orange and crimson bands across the sky, the grey takyr wore a pink blush, and the boundless space around the camp seemed to have lost some of its barren bleakness in these early evening colours.

Chetunov felt completely exhausted. He would like to have gone to bed, not to sleep but to escape from this nagging torture that was his constant companion, to escape from himself. But he could not make up his mind to enter his tent; he did not want to see anybody. There would be questions, he would be made to drink to his "baptism of fire," and then he would be sure to break down: his nerves were too highly strung.

He walked away from the line of tents towards where the frail skeletons of the boring pylons darkened the blue haze of the deepening twilight. Old packing-cases were stacked up beside his path. He walked behind them and stretched himself out on the ground. It felt pleasantly warm from the day's heat. A pink tracery of clouds wove on the sky a complicated design which suddenly and visibly began to melt.

Chetunov knew that he would have to think hard about the events of that day and reach some decision, but his weary brain found room for only one brief thought: If everything worked out all right he would turn over a new leaf. He fell sound asleep, as if plunging into a deep abyss.

"Sergei Sergeyevich! Sergei Sergeyevich!"

Through his dreams, Chetunov recognized the high, boyish voice of Savushkin, the assistant overseer at the boring plant. He opened his eyes and was surprised to see that it was already dark. The sky, spangled with great stars, hung low over his head. Savushkin's round face looked green, like a mermaid's.

"Sergei Sergeyevich!" Savushkin shouted in despair. "Please wake up. I've been looking for you everywhere and here you've been hiding. The chief wants you."

Chetunov's heart jumped and began to thump painfully; his fingertips felt as though they were being nipped by frost.

"Why all the hurry?" he asked, deliberately drawling to gain time. He got up slowly: "Has the chief got somebody with him?"

"Yes, it's those . . . er . . . those archaeologists. All I managed to hear was that they've discovered some burial-ground about a hundred kilometres from here."

So that is what had happened, Chetunov thought as he walked beside Savushkin. His heart thumped so loudly that he drew apart from his companion, fearing that he would betray his nervousness. It was all quite clear. The archaeologists must have been in the second cavity. What other reason would the chief have for summoning him so urgently? Steady now, steady! He took himself in hand, trying to master his thoughts which bounded forward wildly towards a disastrous end. Those archaeologists must have surveyed the second cavity and come across some ancient burial-ground there. Well, for that matter, he might have got there after they had left. What about the graves, though. Oh, if only he knew what they looked like. . . .

Chetunov strained his imagination to form a clear picture of those graves but saw something quite different: the angry, derisive, inflamed eyes of the chief, the mocking smiles on the faces of his companions and he himself, a pitiable, confused figure babbling stupid, feeble words. He groaned so loudly that Savushkin stopped and looked at him perplexed.

"It's my tooth. It's aching," muttered Chetunov, clutching his cheek.

"Would you like me to get you something for it?"

"Yes, please . . . later on. . . ."

Chetunov looked round with a hunted look on his face. In the faint light the takyr gleamed palely like tortoise-shell. All around stretched the great thousand-kilometre long desert. But this boundless space was no less a dungeon, for there was nowhere for him to escape to, nowhere to hide. . . .

Everything that happened after that Chetunov remembered as if through a delirious haze. His eyes and his ears worked quite normally, he answered questions, apparently quite sensibly, but what was reality and what was fantasy he never knew.

Everything was near and palpable but, at the same time, terribly far away, like the sound of a railway-engine's whistle in the night.

When he entered the tent he was met with a gale of laughter and loud jokes. Here it is, he told himself as he felt his lips curve in an anxious, unnatural smile which made his cheeks ache. Next he was introduced to some strange people. One of them had long, ostrich-like legs in tight-fitting white trousers, a head on which the hair stood up like a hedgehog's spines, and a little pointed beard; the other man was young—only a little older than Chetunov himself—moon-faced and extremely shy, blushing all the time for no apparent reason, and lowering his eyes. The elder man had a deep roaring bass voice which quite deafened Chetunov. He kept on distinguishing his own name in this roar and some time passed before he realized that it referred not to him but to his father. Later on, clutching a tuft of soft grey hair, this strange man bellowed something about the graves and again mentioned old Chetunov's name; the blood mounted to the younger man's moon face and the chief laughed and patted Chetunov on the shoulder with his heavy hand.

Then Chetunov finally understood that the discovery that these archaeologists had made confirmed some theory of his father's who loved to poke his nose into other people's subjects. That gave him a few minutes of agonized thought, wondering how this might ease his situation, but just then the chief started to talk about him and the trip he had just made, saying such pleasant, kind things that both of the archaeologists appeared to be very satisfied; the young one smiled at Chetunov and blushed with pleasure, the old one thundered: "That's what it means to be a Chetunov, damn it!" It became clear that the archaeologists' discovery had no connection whatsoever with the second cavity and that it had all happened in quite a different place, so that Chetunov's tortures had been all groundless. This discovery upset him so much that he almost burst out crying; the chief kept on patting him on the shoulder and finally advised him to go to bed.

And then everything vanished. Chetunov found himself standing alone in the emptiness of the night as a chilling wind beat his sweaty face like a damp towel.

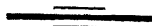
What an idiot he was, he told himself, his fingers clenching. Fancy him thinking that a burial-ground could exist inside a limestone cavity. Why, not even a schoolboy would think of a thing like that. No, he would have to take himself in hand, otherwise God only knew what might happen. Tomorrow he would turn over a new leaf. . . .

He pictured this new page in his life so clearly that he longed impatiently for the next day to begin. He could see himself a changed man—straight and honest in every word, in every moral act, a man of decision who knew neither fear nor hesitation, oh, such a fine, upstanding fellow. . . .

Pushing back the tent-flap he went in. The night-light was glowing. Struchkov's bed was empty—he was, probably, busy on the boring equipment, as usual. Moryagin was asleep, wheezing heavily with his face buried in the pillow. On the bed-side table, under a glass jar the lizard lay dying in the same suffocating heat that Chetunov had himself known that day. Why had he not set it free that morning? Weakness, irresolution, it was from little things like that that everything began. Chetunov glanced at Moryagin's plump cheek with the pillow-crease marks on it; he took a step towards the table and gave the jar a sharp knock. It fell on its side with a tinkling sound but did not break. Moryagin smacked his lips as if kissing the pillow; he did not wake up. The lizard remained motionless. The light of the night-lamp played on its glistening lacquered skin, it reflected coldly and palely in the dead, beady eyes.

Chetunov sprang back as if he had received a blow on the chest and fell flat on his bed. He burst into tears.

Translated by R. P. and V. S.



LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

A. YEGOROV

AGAINST SUBJECTIVISM IN THE THEORY OF ART

AT THE root of the Communist Party's art policy lies the fact that not only all material values in the world but all spiritual values, too, are created by that great source of strength, the people. In antithesis to reactionary bourgeois parties which under the banner of the "independence" of the artist put art at the service of commercial interests, the Communist Party declares its frank opposition to the theory of voluntarism in all its forms; it stands for artistic work that is close and comprehensible to the people, for an art that answers the demands and interests of working people.

In the conditions that prevail in the world today, marked by an intensification of the peoples' struggle against imperialist reaction, a scission is taking place among the intellectuals of capitalist lands. In conflict with an art dominated by the interests of monopoly capitalism, advanced, creative forces are arising—forces that express the interests of the people in literature and art—and a democratic, Socialist culture of the working people is in process of development.

Reactionary imperialist circles stop at nothing to prevent the artist from drawing closer to the people; for this they use all means, beginning with propaganda for subjectivism, the theory of "free will" and the idealist theory of the "hero and the mob," and ending with police persecution of progressive writers, composers, painters, sculptors and actors. Despite this, however, honest-minded artists in capitalist lands are understanding more clearly every day that they have nothing in common with capitalism and that their only way to creative development is in serving not the monopolists, not a financial oligarchy but the people. They are coming out vigorously for an advanced, realistic art that meets the demands and interests of the working people, of all progressive forces in society. And in their struggle they have the support of a vigorously developing art in the countries of Socialism and democracy.

In the lands of the Socialist camp art receives attention from every side, it is the object of constant care from Communist and Workers' Parties, from people's governments, who value highly the significance of art in society, in the Communist education of the masses, and who are devoting their energies to securing abundance both of a material and a spiritual character.

The Artist's Freedom To Create and Originality

Contemporary bourgeois aesthetics preach the absolute freedom of will of the artist, his independence from society and from the objective laws of art. It is asserted that the "sovereign personality of the artist" draws its inspiration not from reality but from its own emotions, from wild and unrestrained imagination on which no restrictions whatsoever can be placed. The adherents of bourgeois aesthetics by all methods and means promote the cult of the individual in art under the banner of the "freedom" of artistic creation. But this is false freedom. Lenin showed that individualism is nothing else than the expression of an arrogant, bourgeois, anarchical outlook on the world. Addressing himself to bourgeois writers, Lenin wrote: "... Your talk about absolute freedom is pure hypocrisy. . . . Are you, Mr. Writer, free from your bourgeois publisher, from your bourgeois public? . . ."

How, indeed, can one talk of freedom of the artist under capitalism if in contemporary capitalist lands, as bourgeois art critics themselves have to admit, there reigns in the sphere of culture a system of autocratic plutocracy where the minority decides the cultural destiny of the majority?

The imperialist bourgeoisie is far from indifferent to the aims the artist sets himself in his work. It makes vigorous efforts to influence the artist himself and the people by its policy. As a means of moulding public opinion, especially extensive use is made in capitalist lands of advertisement which is almost entirely concentrated in the hands of monopolies. For example, in the United States the National Publishers' Association, of which the house of Morgan is the sponsor, controls an overwhelming majority of the magazines in which book advertisements appear. Naturally, these magazines harass advanced, progressive writers and exert influence of an imperialist trend on the minds of readers.

At the present time there is a fairly widespread practice of what in the flowery language of bourgeois journalism is known as industrial patronage. What it boils down to is that the artist sells his talent to the bourgeoisie and serves the interests not of society but of a narrow group of individuals who own capital. It means that painters sell their brush to cartels and commercial firms and work on advertisements and other jobs commissioned by the bourgeoisie. This so-called industrial patronage is not confined to serving commercial interests. The bourgeoisie uses artists in this way to conduct propaganda for its political ideas, imposing on them its own aims and wishes, which have nothing in common with true art. Such is the position not only in painting but in all other forms of art. For instance practically the entire American moving pictures industry belongs to eight Hollywood firms controlled by the monopolists Rockefeller, Morgan, and Lehman.

Where then is the freedom of the artist? In Hollywood, declared the American actor Marlon Brando, reigns the golden calf which ruins everything. The position in the American theatre is no better. There, as in films, enterprising monopoly capital and its diploma-spangled hirelings decide the aims that bourgeois art should serve.

With their double-talk about the freedom for artistic creation the imperialist bourgeoisie zealously attacks those artists who make it their

aim to paint capitalist society in its true colours and to serve the people and the cause of progress. There is no freedom of expression for them; and they are robbed not only of their freedom but of any means of earning a living. In the United States, for example, progressive artists and societies are ruthlessly persecuted; during the last two years, the American press states, over 400 progressive actors, script-writers and producers were dismissed from radio and television. The Un-American Activities Committee purges public libraries and bans the books of Mark Twain, Theodore Dreiser, Howard Fast and other progressive writers. So much for the "freedom" of expression that the artist enjoys in America!

The bourgeoisie permits the artist "freedom of expression" only up to that point where its interests remain untouched; but let the artist dare to attack the power of capital and the bourgeoisie will persecute him mercilessly. There was a time when French bourgeois critics were fulsome in their praise of Roger Vailland's books *Les mauvais coups* and *Drôle de jeu*. But when Roger Vailland bravely took up writing realistically and started to defend the interests of his people, the situation took a radical turn. His play *Le colonel Foster plaidera coupable*, which unmasks American intervention in Korea, was banned by the authorities.

The imperialists are doing all they can to hinder the development of advanced, progressive art. But they welcome any folly of artists of any anti-democratic school, however insignificant it may be. For it is the art policy of the imperialist bourgeoisie to divorce it from the people and to place it at the service of foul commercial interests in order to hoodwink the public and lull their stirring revolutionary consciousness; in this way they wish art to become propaganda for an inhuman ideology of enslavement and genocide.

The foreign enemies of the Soviet people make every effort to prove that in this country talent is in chains and the artist deprived of all possibilities of giving his originality free rein. What originality can there be, they ask, how can a Soviet man have any individuality as an artist if all Soviet artists think in terms of the same Marxist-Leninist outlook. There is, indeed, little original about these attempts to slander Soviet art, for they have been repeated with slight variations over a period of more than thirty years.

True, Soviet artists do have in common a single set of principles—the Marxist-Leninist outlook which prevails in a Socialist society, for it is the only world outlook that expresses the interests of the working class, of the people as a whole. No other set of principles but this can consolidate ideologically a Socialist society. And the attempt of the imperialist bourgeoisie to pin on Soviet art the label of monotony and uniformity is nothing but slander and deception.

The fact that Soviet writers share a common outlook on the world, in itself a sign of the moral and political unity of Soviet society, does not rule out originality from the work of a true artist or diminish the variety of artistic gifts. On the contrary, it presupposes them. In what way does Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* resemble Alexei Tolstoy's *Ordeal*, or Furmanov's *Chapayev* resemble Fadeyev's *The Nineteen*?

If we want to see whether Soviet artists are original, look at the way they write about similar events and occurrences. For instance, the role of young Soviet people during the Second World War is the theme both

of Fadeyev's *The Young Guard* and of Perventsev's *Honour Always*. But each writer directs his attention to a different aspect of the subject. In describing the patriotic unity of the Soviet people face to face with the grim test of war, Fadeyev regards the heroic features in the characters of the young people of Krasnodon as having been instilled there before the war though emerging more clearly during its course. Perventsev, on the other hand, is interested in the process in which the Socialist, patriotic consciousness of Soviet youth is formed. Fadeyev spends little time on the early history of his heroes, while for Perventsev it is especially important. And the explanation of this lies in the artist's own experience of life, his individual qualities; these play an important role in art. A single world outlook does not exclude a wealth of shades in the understanding of reality, the singularities of experience of life, the interests and inclinations of people. What is involved here is the living, creative and constantly developing Marxist-Leninist outlook on the world which is winning new adherents among people of highly varied individual peculiarities and unique life histories.

In the article "Party Organization and Party Literature," Lenin emphasized that "... literary activity is least of all subject to mechanical equalization or levelling, to the domination of a majority over a minority. It goes without saying that in this sphere it is absolutely necessary to ensure larger scope for personal initiative and individual inclinations, full play for thought and imagination, form and content." The Marxist-Leninist outlook as an organic part of his thought and practice helps the artist to understand life more profoundly, to comprehend the new tendencies in social development, to create genuinely popular works, works that are rich in content and in form. In contrast to the standardized productions of reactionary bourgeois artists, the works of Socialist realist artists have a clearly defined style of their own, a genuine originality.

What is the source of the originality of the works of Soviet artists who are describing Socialist reality from a single point of view, that of the Marxist-Leninist outlook?

This originality is frequently attributed to nothing other than a highly individual interpretation of some feature of life. For instance, in comparing the two statues of Gogol executed by Tomsy and Manizer people sometimes say that Tomsy's work portrays Gogol as a romantic dreamer while Manizer's shows him as a caustic satirist only because of each sculptor's individual approach to his subject. But that is another way of saying that the sculptors were not creating a portrait of Gogol but at the best expressing only their own conception of him.

Pushkin long ago pointed out the danger in identifying the hero with the personality of the artist who has created him, and categorically rejected the subjective views according to which the writer is somehow unable to write poems about others, "as though there were a tacit ban on writing of another man."

The distinctive differences in the portraits of Gogol by Tomsy and Manizer are to be explained by the fact that Gogol's work combined romanticism and accusation, and not at all because Manizer and Tomsy "imagined" different Gogols. Each sculptor, according to his inclinations and talent, was able, without distorting objective truth, to bring out what appealed to him in Gogol in the light of the aesthetic ideas of the Soviet

people. To consider as original and distinctive only the subjective side of an artist's work is to fail to understand his work and to adopt a position of subjective idealism in the understanding of art, and that means denying the objective laws of artistic creation.

The opinion is sometimes expressed that the originality of the Soviet artists with their common Marxist outlook is wholly a matter of special manners of writing, modelling etc. This, too, means being onesided. True, even when they are working in the same genre and describing the same or similar aspects of Socialist reality from the Marxist-Leninist point of view, Soviet artists do not repeat each other. This, however, is not only because they write in different manners. It must not be forgotten that in life the same or similar phenomenon never repeats itself exactly. That is the main source of an artistic work's originality of content and, hence, of form. Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplturned* and Lacis' *To the New Shore* both describe the process of collectivization of agriculture and the consolidation of the kolkhoz system, but the first describes what happened on the Don and the second is about Latvia and, moreover, the events occurred at different times. Naturally, the general process—collectivization—was different in each place. Life provided the writers with different characters; those characters acted in different conditions; they had different national qualities. All those differences found their place in the books. And it is just because Sholokhov and Lacis wrote true descriptions of the process of collectivization in the particular settings of the Don and Latvia that their books were original and distinctive and that they were able to provide so vivid a description of what is common to and unites all the nations of the Soviet Union who, under the Communist Party's leadership, are building a new life. It must also be remembered that the artist is no mere copyist of reality but according to the purpose of his work and the nature of his talent selects from reality the aspects on which to concentrate his attention; and then, when he has grasped the ideas embodied in those aspects of reality, he truthfully clothes them in the correct artistic form.

As Belinsky rightly pointed out "true originality in invention and, hence, in form, is possible only when the poet is devoted to reality and truth." Now what does being devoted to reality and truth mean? Above everything it means studying and reflecting the subject in all its particularity. More, it means that the study of the subject must be not superficial but profound, concrete; the image of life that is being portrayed must be grasped by the artist heart and soul; he must *live* experience. When an author tries to describe something that he has failed to understand or feel concretely and artistically, he gives us instead of live full-blooded images characters that are simply "walking slogans". . . .

Originality in art presupposes the ability to see and fully to portray new aspects of the reality of national life, the actual trends of development and the struggle for advanced trends. An empirical naturalistic representation of trivialities on the surface of life, a relish in the negative side of life are repugnant to originality.

"The true artist is equally successful in his portrayal of the characters of villains and heroes," Belinsky rightly pointed out, "when we find in a novel that the characters of only the villains are drawn successfully and that the heroes are unsuccessful, it is a clear sign either that the author

did not know his business, undertook something beyond his powers and gifts and, consequently, offended against the fundamental laws of art, in other words contrived, wrote and strained rhetorically where he should have been working creatively; or that he introduced those characters into his work needlessly, only for the superficial requirements of morality, and contrary to the inner idea of his work, and, consequently, again offended against the fundamental laws of art."

It is useful to recall at the present time this important statement of the aesthetics of realism so clearly formulated by Belinsky. We still have some writers who under the guise of originality and novelty adopt a petty-bourgeois attitude to life and appear to be quite incapable of establishing a connection between separate aspects of life, of showing the struggle of contradictory tendencies and the victory of the new. This attitude manifested itself clearly not long ago in such plays as *The Visitors* by L. Zorin, *A Personality* by I. Gorodetsky and *End of Pompeyev* by N. Virta. A warped view of Socialist reality is given in these and such-like plays. And it is not surprising that there is not a grain of originality to be found in them. They are constructed to a single pattern: the characters are stereotypes, as alike as telegraph poles along a railway-line. Such plays constitute a departure from the demands of Socialist realism in art, for the reflection of reality on the basis of the method of Socialist realism presupposes a deep understanding of living truth, of the essence of things, the portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development.

Every opportunity is provided to Soviet artists to show their individual abilities and inclinations in the service of the people. Socialism, having freed art from the power of capital, opens before every artist unlimited possibilities for working freely and according to the nature of his talent in the devoted service of the people.

Bourgeois aesthetics have recently laid much stress on the idea that the artist should express in his work not objective reality but only his own direct conception of it, his emotions. Such views have their echoes in our literary circles too, as, for instance, in V. Pomerantsev's article in *Novy Mir* "Sincerity in Literature." The main point of this article lies in the statement: "The degree of sincerity, that is to say, the spontaneity of the work, ought to be the first criterion of the value of a work of art." Addressing himself to the writer, he declares that feeling in its turn can give us an artistic embodiment of any idea.

This is a harmful as well as a confusing statement, for Pomerantsev substitutes abstract, subjective considerations about sincerity and feelings in general for truth to life, for those advanced ideas which reach their highest expression in adherence to the principles of Communism.

Frankness and feeling are, unquestionably, essential to a real work of art. A work that fails to reflect human feeling, including the author's feelings, and, all the more so a work in which the author is insincere with himself, with his own conscience and with the reader, such a work can have no artistic worth. Art has no room for heartless standardization, hypocrisy and lies.

The genuine artist reflects life not like a mirror but by filtering life through the prism of his own philosophy and outlook. Every true work of art gives an honest reflection of life, in which the artist's attitude to what is reflected is also visible. This attitude of the artist to reality is a direct one in the case of lyric poetry; in epic it is visible directly through

portraits, through the characteristics of the characters etc., and in drama mainly through the principles that underlie the relations of the characters among themselves. The personality of the artist, therefore, always shows through the fabric of the work of art in one way or another. Sincerity, honesty in the artist's approach to the life he is describing are as necessary for art as air is for man. But it certainly does not follow from this that the artist's sincerity is the chief criterion of his work.

Cases occur when an artist quite sincerely takes a wrong turning; then the critics have to separate truth from fallacy in his work. As an example we may take Tolkachev's "Christ at Majdanek," a series of drawings in which it was the artist's intention to arouse sympathy for the victims of fascism; as it turned out his works extolled an idea of fate and submission to destiny that is quite alien to the Soviet people's way of thinking.

There are artists abroad who describe with relish the horrors of atomic warfare in all their grisly details, sincerely believing that they are showing up the ways of imperialism. They do not see that objectively this may deepen people's feelings of despair and pessimism, and sap their belief in their own strength, especially if the artist does not show the growth of the anti-war movement among the common people and the ways and means of their victory over the forces of reaction and war.

It is impermissible to substitute a subjective for an objective criterion in assessing the value of a work of art: the truth of a work of art is determined by the degree to which the artistic images correspond not to the author's feelings and desires but to the truth of life, to objective reality which exists independent of the mind of man and mankind. Marxist-Leninist aesthetics are guided by the materialist theory of man's understanding of the objective world, the theory which teaches that "... things exist outside us. Our perceptions and ideas are their images. Verification of these images, differentiation between true and false images, is given by practice." (Lenin)

The fuller and deeper the artist expresses what is unique in his own times, the life of his people, their mentality and specific qualities, the more original and significant will be his work. It is the true and profound reflection of its time that gives a work of art its unfading beauty, charm and distinctiveness. Such works as the epics of ancient Greece, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the tragedies of Shakespeare and the works of Rabelais, the writings of Goethe and of Balzac, of Pushkin and of Tolstoy, of Gorky and of Mayakovsky are unique and eternal because each of them gives a complete, rapid and artistically perfect reflection of the lives of the people of its time as a definite stage in the development of society and world culture. We see, then, that the authentic distinctiveness and originality of a work of art derives above all from the objective historical conditions in which that work evolves, from the conditions of the times, from the extent to which the artist faithfully and artistically mirrors the leading trends of those times. It should also be borne in mind that the personality of the artist himself is a product of the historical conditions of the times in which he works. The importance of an artist in the artistic development of mankind is in direct dependence on the depth and truthfulness with which his works express the life of his people.

It follows that the determining factor in the development of art is not the feelings or will of this or that artist but the objective laws regulat-

ing social development, among them the objective laws of the development of art itself. Only recognition of the objective law of artistic creation and of the link between the artist and the conditions of social life, can give a true understanding of the significance of the personality of the artist in the history of art.

The significance of this consists in the fact that on the basis of the objective laws of art, every real artist, according to his natural inclinations, ability and talent, reflects reality by the specific means of the particular art form, teaching the people ideas, meeting and developing aesthetic demands of the people, moulding their souls. In his own way he grasps the essential side of phenomena of life, of character, and expresses them in unique and distinctive artistic forms. He lays the mark of his personality not only on what he creates but on what those who come after him will create. The work of a great artist created in definite social conditions represents an advance in the artistic development of his own people, and of humanity as a whole. Writer, sculptor, painter, composer, these are not impartial recorders of what they see and hear. A true reflection of life in realistic art contains the artist's emotional attitude towards reality. But it would be wrong to consider that only as an expression of the artist's subjectivity.

Belinsky was right when referring to Gogol's humorous attitude to life, he attributed it to the peculiarities of the subject, the accurate way in which Gogol described it and the lofty aesthetic and moral position the writer took from which to reflect reality. We might add that the position from which the artist looks on the world is not a merely personal individual position but, when all is said and done, the position taken by his class, by the society to which he belongs. If an artist expresses in his works merely his private feelings, interests, experiences, which are of interest to no one but himself, his works will have no significance in the history of art or of society. On the other hand, the artist who knows how to express in a full and profound way the thoughts and aspirations of millions of the best people of his times will become a genuine authority in his own times and will exercise a lasting influence through his works.

Take, Balzac, for instance. If there was nothing to be found in his works except the reflection of his legitimist political views and sympathies, they would not have the importance that they have always had thanks to the realistic way in which they depict a whole era in French life. In writing, Balzac, an accurate describer of reality, surmounted many of his class prejudices and personal sympathies, which were untrue to life.

In revealing the real life of his times, Balzac created, beside his examples of bourgeois money-grabbers, splendid types representing the people and republican heroes. He showed that to find real honesty and respectability one had to look not to the mansions of bankers and selfish property owners but in the huts of humble people. Balzac sensed the crying contradiction between the interests of the workers—people worn out by exhausting labour—and of the bourgeoisie that was living at the workers' expense. He drew a rapturous picture of the struggle of the working people for a better life, of the people's heroes "as firm as iron, as pure as gold," "great and noble-hearted." No doubt that all that was the result of the influence that the popular movements of his times and, in particular, the working-class movement had on Balzac. As Soviet literary research

has established, Balzac was interested in and made a serious study of the situation of the working class of his times, and of the workers' struggle against oppression.

Of course, the portrayal of life and character in *The Human Comedy* which sounds an elegy for an upper class irretrievably doomed to collapse, the bitter irony and caustic satire directed at aristocracy, the delight he took in working people and their heroes is not to be attributed merely to the special features of the period. For contemporaneously with Balzac were writers such as Lamartine who praised the "blessings" of bourgeois "civilization" to the skies and were outspoken supporters of the bourgeois regime; reactionary romantics such as Chateaubriand who nursed vain dreams of turning back the wheels of history. Real life is full of contradictions; it contains various conflicting tendencies, various types opposed to each other. A writer's social position, his class sympathies and antipathies, his outlook on the world and, finally, the distinctive quality of his gifts, these are what decide the way he will portray these contradictory trends, these different social types and how true to life, how profound, complete, vivid and acute is his portraiture.

Balzac is a great and original writer when the strong side of his philosophy and talent shows in his work—above all when he is criticizing capitalism; it is there that Balzac's work serves the people, the leading forces in society.

We see then that every genuinely original work of art is a monument to the times in which it was created and contains something unique in idea and artistic form; it expresses and reflects the progressive tendencies of social development. That is what gives it its educational role, what makes it the artistic embodiment of an idea, what gives it its permanent significance.

The works of Soviet Socialist art are of specially great significance, for they reflect a new and unprecedented epoch of great creative activity by the mass of the people, they reflect the reality of Socialism. As they work, Soviet artists are accomplishing a task of historic importance to the entire world—they are building Communism, they are laying a new way in the artistic development of mankind.

Art Draws Its Strength from Its Connections with the People

Anyone who follows bourgeois ideology attentively knows how ruthlessly and cynically bourgeois sociologists and artists of today slight and humiliate the common people by reducing to nothing their creative role in the development of material and spiritual culture. Bourgeois ideologists, of course, are not able to deny that it is the workers not the capitalists who keep the factories going, the peasants not the landowners who till the soil. The theoreticians of the reactionary classes consider the life of the spirit, art and literature as the monopoly of a certain *élite* placed above the people and independent of the people. Such opinions and theories which discredit the role of the people in the history of culture were first conceived in the days of slave-owning. They are now being energetically advanced by the ideologists of imperialist reaction who, out of

fear for the growing forces of peace, democracy and Socialism, are fostering a bestial hatred for the common people and doing all they can to spread the idealistic theory of the "hero and the mob," a theory hostile to the working people.

The cult of the individual has not appeared in an antagonistic society by mere chance. It is a reflection of the fact that in an antagonistic society the workers who are mainly responsible for creating all material and spiritual values are virtually deprived of the possibility to own them, they are handicapped by a life of hard work which makes it practically impossible for them to have any access to culture. In an antagonistic society brain work, including the work of artists, is monopolized by the exploiting classes. The practice of science, art and politics is the privilege of the intellectuals who serve the propertied, exploiting, classes and support them. From this springs the illusory, fallacious conception that it is not the people but an élite which exercises the decisive power in the creation and development of science and art. Bourgeois theories of art lend their support to all kinds of illusions bred by the regime of exploitation; they seek to suppress the role of the people in artistic creation and the connection between the work of leading men of the arts and the life and struggle of the masses.

The class background of subjectivism and of the idealistic cult of the individual in art is clear: they are intended to divorce art from the people and to turn it into a means of providing sybaritic pleasure to the possessing classes, into an instrument for the spiritual enslavement of "ordinary people."

The imperialistic bourgeoisie tries to kindle in people its mercenary bourgeois individualism in order to sow disunity among the workers. But the methods of bourgeois individualism of old are no longer as effective as they used to be. So we find the old tune of the bourgeoisie about the absolute freedom and sovereignty of the artist in society being sung today in a new key. There was a time when the ideologists of the bourgeoisie counselled the artist to escape from worries and fear in his ivory tower; many artists took this advice and in their works tried to instill this idea in the masses. Today that does not satisfy the bourgeoisie. Now it is insisting that artists take their work to the "mob," to the most backward strata of society, and corrupt the minds of working people. With this aim, for instance, books are written in the United States in which Negroes are shown being lynched not by fascist hooligans but by ordinary American people, books in which the Negroes are slanderously portrayed as drug-addicts and inferior people, people of a "lower race." In this manner the imperialistic bourgeoisie is trying to sow discord among the working people, to make them into obedient tools of monopoly capital, to set one people against another.

While representing ordinary people as inferior beings, reactionary bourgeois writers, painters, sculptors and composers are at the same time doing everything to glorify the "strong man," hostile to the people and set above them; they advocate the cult of the Superman, and eulogize all kinds of murderers and fascist robbers as heroes who are ruling the destiny of mankind. All this they do, it need hardly be said, for good money at the orders of the magnates of monopoly capital. The notorious Frank Phares, the American detective novelist tells the world that murder is his business. "My murders are within the law," he writes, and adds:

"In fact some sixty-five have been executed with the full endorsement of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"I am a writer of murder mysteries for radio and television."

The imperialists encourage inhuman propaganda of this sort because it justifies, strengthens their rule, popularizes the idea of the fascization of the bourgeois state and lays the ground for another imperialist war. It is not for nothing that Hollywood has recently put out a number of films glorifying Hitler, Himmler, Goering, Rommel and other fascist criminals.

The writings of bourgeois aestheticians, art and literary critics, no less than the works of contemporary bourgeois artists, propagate the idealist cult of the individual, which is contrary to the interests of the people. The history of art is being rewritten by them as the work of individual "sovereign personalities," who "create" their works independently of society and the people—intuitively, so to speak, and are the sole creators of all that is beautiful and elevated on earth. According to the ideologists of the imperialistic bourgeoisie, the people are not only incapable of artistic creation but even of appreciating the great works of artistic genius. . . .

It is characteristic that the ideologists of the reactionary classes even contrive to present folk-lore as something which the exploiting upper clique is responsible for. Thus, according to the theory of the "reduction of culture" which enjoys an unquestionable reputation in reactionary folk-lore circles, art is created by the "upper classes"—in other words by the exploiting classes—while the people take this art only to vulgarize and mutilate it. The supporters of this anti-scientific theory base their speculations on the fact that many works of popular origin reach us in later transcriptions which are not always free from "glosses" and "corrections" introduced by the ideologists of the exploiting classes. They also allude to the fact that the positive heroes of works of folk-lore include representatives of the "higher social strata" as well as of the people. At the same time the pedlars of this fallacious theory remain completely silent about the spirit of freedom and antagonism to exploitation that breathes through the best works of folk-lore, expressing the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of the working people.

In their treatment of individual works of art bourgeois literary and art critics take resort to silence when they have to deal with writers of revolutionary views such as Radishchev, Griboyedov, Pushkin, Lermontov, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Gorky, Mayakovsky, Shevchenko, Heine, Ferdinand Freiligrath, Eugène Pottier and many others, and especially present day opponents of imperialism. Artists whose works stand for the idea of liberating people from oppression, even those artists who themselves belong to the exploiting classes, are usually presented in the writings of bourgeois critics in a false light: the roots of their work, their links with the people, their best creations are overlooked while the weak sides of their works, their prejudices, are given an exaggerated importance. Bourgeois literary and art critics dig out all kinds of trivialities in an artist's private life and overlook the main things in his work and life. By this approach to the study of the lives and works of leading progressive artists they aim at suppressing the fundamental, determining and decisive sources of the writers' realistic work which is rooted in the life and struggle of the people. . . .

In advocating the cult of the individual in the theory of art, bourgeois aestheticians like to plead that in the process of artistic creation everything depends somehow on the artist's imagination in which the subject, image and idea in art has its source.

Undoubtedly, the imagination of the artist plays a highly important part in the creative process. The genuine artist never stops on the surface of events, never limits himself to recording the ephemeral, casual moment. He tries to clothe in artistic form the essence of the complicated world of human relations, and that is something that cannot be done without bringing the imagination into play. But it is not the artist's imagination but objective reality, the life of the people, that provides the source of a work of art. The theme, subject, idea of a work of art are borne in the artist's mind but they always arise under life's influence, they are drawn from life, they are, in the long run, determined by social conditions, by reality. With the help of his creative imagination the realist artist comprehends, reproduces, depicts human relations, but he always compares his artistic images with life itself. In realistic art the creative imagination serves the understanding of living truth and is subordinate to the objective laws of art.

The story of Maxim Gorky's novel, *The Artamonovs*, the subject of which was described by Lenin as excellent, may serve as a significant example. In a letter to N. K. Krupskaya written on May 16, 1930, Gorky recalled the talk he had about literature with Lenin in Capri. "I said that I dreamed of writing the story of a single family over a period of a century, from the year 1813 when Moscow was rebuilt, up to our days. The founder of the family would be a peasant, a bailiff, set free from serfdom by a landowner for his feats as a partisan in the war of 1812. From that family we would get petty officials, priests, manufacturers, members of the Petrashevsky and the Nechayev groups,¹ men of the 'seventies, and of the 'eighties. Lenin listened most attentively, questioned me a little and then said: 'The subject is excellent, of course—a difficult one, requiring much time. I think you could manage it but I don't see how you are going to finish it. Reality does not provide you with an ending. No, you will have to write that book after the Revolution, now you ought to write something like *Mother!*' I, naturally, don't see the end of the book myself. You see, Lenin always took a remarkably straight line to the truth, he always foresaw and had a presentiment for everything."

Life proved the correctness of Lenin's advice. By comparing the first draft of *The Artamonovs* with the final one that reached print, Soviet students of literature have established that in projecting his novel Gorky intended to reflect in three generations of a bourgeois family the main stages of development of Russian capitalism and its inevitable ruin. But only the victory of the October Socialist Revolution provided the writer with the necessary material for the right artistic realization of his idea. This is clearly seen in the changes that Gorky introduced into the final text. He deliberately reduced the subject lines as far as Arta-

¹ The Petrashevsky group was formed in the 'forties of the last century by Russian progressive, democratically-minded intellectuals who came mostly from the lower stratum of the landed nobility. Their leader, M. Butashevich-Petrashkevsky, was a follower of Fourier.

The Nechayev groups, organized in the late 'sixties, consisted mostly of students and had a conspiratorial character. They were headed by the anarchist Sergei Nechayev.

monov's relations with the nobility and Dremovtsi (Miamlintsi in the first version) were concerned, and then heavily stressed and brought forward the representatives of the third generation of the Morozov family—especially Zakhar Morozov—the representatives of the revolutionary people.

The true artist draws from the people not only the content of his work but also the means of expression, the methods and ways of representing reality. Language—the medium of artistic expression in many spheres of art such as literature, the theatre, the cinema—serves as a material for the creation of artistic images, and language is something that the people creates.

Great writers not only use the treasure that is the language of the people, they enrich it. From the rich arsenal of the language of their people they select the most vivid and expressive means and create works of deathless art. In one of his letters to Repin, Stasov wrote with full justification that Pushkin and Lermontov, Gogol and Leo Tolstoy “were independent and specially Russian not only through their *subject-matter and the tasks they set themselves* but in every detail of language, speech, phrase, locution, but most of all by their *manner of expression*.”

Drawing from the sources of folk-lore, the real artist reshapes it in a creative way and forms of it original, distinctive works imbued with the spirit and philosophy of the people. Besides, the making of a realistic artistic image, determined by the content of the work, is always in one way or another conditioned by the democratic tradition in the sphere of artistic form: in painting the artist uses methods and means which have been accumulated in the long process of development of popular representational art, in music the “language” of the classics assimilated the specific qualities of the musical “language” of folk songs and dances, etc. Glinka truly said that “Music is created by the people; we artists only arrange it.”

Every artist at work on his creations must use the experience of preceding generations. This artistic treasure-trove—the means of expression, the methods and manners of artistic representation—is the product of the work of many generations. All these means and methods are being constantly enriched and perfected by the most talented representatives of the people.

By his works a great artist exercises a great influence on the spiritual growth of the people. In that lies the strength of the ideas of progressive art in the development of society.

But ideas, we all know, do not act automatically: it is the people armed with those ideas that acts. Only when it has been mastered by the masses, by the people, does the idea of progressive art gain great social significance, and become a material force. The masses master an idea only under definite objective conditions. Dobrolyubov compared the activity of historical personalities to a spark which, if it falls on a stone, goes out and causes an explosion only when it touches gunpowder. It is the same in the realm of ideas. The strength of the social effect of art is explicable not only by its artistic value or by the idea it embodies but by the attitude of the masses to that idea, and that, in turn, depends on objective conditions in the life of the people, its social situation. The people, thus, have the decisive voice at this stage, too: they determine the vitality of a work of art, they embody the ideas of progressive artists in life. The

people enrich all spheres of social life including art and literature with a mass of talent; every great artist is the son of his people, one who expresses the ideas of its progressive classes.

The denial of the connection between the individual and certain classes, its connection with the people, of the pre-eminence of society, of the people, of class over individual personalities leads straight to the idealistic cult of the individual in history in general and in the history of art in particular.

Marxist-Leninist teaching firmly rejects the idealistic cult of the individual in the sphere of artistic creation; this is the theory which puts the "sovereign individual" apart from the people and raises him on a pedestal solely as the creator while art itself is reduced to the level of the selfish desires and perverted feelings of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie and turned into an entertainment for idle people or a means for corrupting the working class. At the same time the Marxist-Leninist theory in no way belittles the significance of individual personalities in history, in various spheres of public activity. On the contrary it has for the first time posed this question on scientific grounds. It demands an elucidation and study of the specific role of the individual, his activities in inseparable connection with classes, with the people, from which he springs and which form him, with the concrete historical conditions in which he lives and works.

Marxist-Leninist doctrine rejects most emphatically any attempt to present the question in such a way that collective creation on the part of the masses is seen as the suppression of the freedom to create by individual personalities. In fact the flourishing of collective creation by the masses means that the powers of creation of every member of the collective, every individual flourish with it.

The main force of historical progress is the people. It is the people who by its labour creates all material and spiritual culture, including artistic values. The decisive role in art always lies with the people. And this is so not only because material culture is the basis on which spiritual culture develops but because artistic creativity of the masses is inexhaustible artistic creation, and therein lies the most profound source of creation for a good artist. It is the people that gives birth to geniuses, to individual talents, that rears them and shapes them.

The ideologists of the bourgeoisie maintain that in recognizing the pre-eminence of society, of the people, of the collective over the individual Marxist-Leninist doctrine denies the importance of genius, of artistic abilities in art. That is silly. Marxist-Leninist aesthetics are far from jettisoning the role of leading artists of genius, of creative ability and leanings. Marxist-Leninist aesthetics are opposed to the mysticism with which reactionary ideologists surround the creative processes of an artist of genius. Bourgeois theoreticians in the arts regard a genius as some heaven-sent, chosen individual standing above the society he belongs to, above the people.

Marxist-Leninist aesthetics destroy the mystical cult of genius. They provide scientific proof that it is nonsense to oppose geniuses to the people for the reason that a genuinely great artist is one who successfully serves by his art the progress of his people and, consequently, of all mankind.

The appearance of prominent individuals in the field of art is not something fortuitous. It is caused by and is dependent on the general train of the regular development of society because it responds to historical necessity and the requirements of social development, because it helps to solve the gathering tasks that face the people. An artistic genius has no existence independent from society. On the contrary, social conditions determine the possibilities of developing and using the creative abilities of the people and of separate individuals.

We know, for instance, that the capitalist mode of production is hostile to art and especially to poetry. Under capitalism the people is deprived of conditions favourable for the development of their artistic capabilities. The development of individual talent in capitalist society is achieved at the cost of suppressing talent in the masses. This is no mere chance. The exceptional concentration of artistic talent in an individual and the accompanying suppression of talent in the masses, as Karl Marx showed, is a consequence of the capitalistic division of labour, which fetters and suppresses the spiritual, aesthetic interests and the ability of the worker, condemning him to ruthless exploitation, unemployment and privation.

Capitalist mode of production is inimical to art not only because among workers crushed by extenuating physical work it is difficult, well-nigh impossible for talent to force its way into artistic channels, but also because the bourgeoisie turns art, as it turns all other forms of activity, into a commodity and seeks to subordinate it to the power of the money-bag.

The main ground on which in conditions of an antagonistic society the creative power of the people is most fully manifested is in the revolutionary class struggle of the masses against the exploiters. The history of art shows that the appearance of prominent personalities in various spheres of art is usually connected with a turning point in the history of peoples, with an intensification of the class or national-liberation struggle, with epochs of social revolutions, with progressive periods and epochs in the history of society. It suffices to recall the appearance in literature of Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Rabelais and other giants of the Renaissance which marked the crisis of feudalism and the turning point between feudalism and capitalism; or the appearance of the great school of Russian 19th-century realists in the period when the Russian bourgeois democratic revolution was brewing. The mighty upsurge of Russian classical literature in the 19th century cannot be understood apart from its connection with the liberation movement of the Russian people. This connection gave Russian art a powerful stimulus for its ideological and artistic development.

An understanding of the rise of Socialist realism in Russia requires no less an appreciation of the fact, one of universal historical importance, that at the turn of the 19th century the centre of the revolutionary movement moved to Russia and that the work of Maxim Gorky—the stormy petrel of the proletarian revolution—was a reflection of the very deep contradictions in Russian reality and a response to the requirements of the proletarian revolutionary movement.

It is no accident that in present circumstances it is the writers of democratic, revolutionary tendencies, linked with the movement of the

Socialist proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, with the national-liberation struggle of the peoples, who are fighting for the flourishing of progressive national art.

Thus the history of art and literature bears clear witness to the fact that the development of artistic creation in each country is conditioned by the sum of social conditions in the environment. The source of creative power of great artists lies above all in that historic movement of the people, the advanced social classes, which forms and brings those artists forward only for them to become the mouthpieces of their society.

As soon as the artist breaks with the people his talents and his creative powers become exhausted; for when art is deprived of any deep social content and interest it runs into a blind alley. This happens even to geniuses. Remember Gogol's *Chosen Passages from Correspondence with Friends*.

Contemporary life provides examples no less eloquent of the axiom that isolation from the people destroys artistic talent and condemns the artist to impotence. . . .

Neither art nor the artists' talents can develop unless they penetrate deeply into the life of the people, unless they are true to life.

Using Marxist-Leninist theory as their guide, Soviet critics and students of literature and art are strictly applying in their work the principles of partisanship and respect for the historic process in the appreciation of art; they are careful to consider the activities of artists from a concrete, historical point of view, in close connection with the social forces and classes which they serve. Only from the position of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics can a consistent scientific history of art and literature be written. We must admit, however, that, despite all their achievements, our literary and art critics and theoreticians have many shortcomings.

Soviet philosophers and students of art and literature are not paying due attention to the objective laws of art in their studies; there is still some weakness in their exposure of the subjectivist theories of which there is such a spate in the field of bourgeois aesthetics, art and literature. As a result of this neglect, some works by Soviet philosophers and literary critics contain traces of voluntarism when the will of the artist is considered to be the main thing in the creative process, the content of the work being reduced merely to expression of the ideas, feelings and views of the artist. Sometimes freedom of the artist in the creative process is being understood as the rejection of the objective laws of art; this is to give it a subjectivist interpretation.

Objective criteria must prevail in art as in art criticism. That is sometimes forgotten. For example, a recent issue of the magazine *Teatr* contained a leading article that, while rightly attacking standardization in art and criticism and calling for a clash of opinion, for emotion and even passion in criticism, went seriously astray when it continued with: "emotional and passionate criticism cannot be conceived of without a personal attitude towards works of art; it *determines* not only the moral aspect of critical activity but *the quality and craftsmanship of the criticism, its ideological and aesthetic level, its effective power and social application.*" (my italics—A. Y.) According to this, the degree of emotion and passion present in criticism decides everything, including its ideological and aesthetic level. True, the article makes the reservation that it does not mean to deny

"objective criteria in art and absolute aesthetic values." But, in fact, that is what it does. In this way *Teatr*, while quite rightly attacking dogmatism in art criticism shows a tendency towards subjectivism and relativism.

The practice of art in its history certainly provides examples of the relative nature of certain aesthetic views. As *Teatr* justly points out even such classical achievements of criticism as Belinsky's essay on Gogol's *The Inspector-General* or Dobrolyubov's review of Ostrovsky's *The Storm* do not put an end to all research and creative criticism of these particular works. But in the relative nature of aesthetic truth, opinions and principles Marxism by no means sees the denial of objective truth, but only an example of the historical limitations that are at work at any given moment. Marxist art criticism has nothing in common with absolute relativism; Marxist art criticism means the objective cognition carried through to its final conclusion, and that includes Communist partisanship, in other words, coming out openly in the service of the working class, of the vital interests of all working people. Communist partisanship in art cannot be squared with subjectivism. That requires saying, because there are still people who have tried and who go on trying to interpret partisanship in philosophy, science and art in the spirit of subjective idealism.

Some art theoreticians assert that artistic truth is derived from the fusion of the artist's experience with the experience of the reader, listener, spectator, etc. Here, too, there is a hint of a subjectivist, idealistic interpretation of artistic truth, of Machism and Bogdanovism in the understanding of truth as the "ideological form of collective human experience." According to this conception of objective truth, held by the followers of Mach and Bogdanov, religion is no less truthful than science since religion is also an ideological form of collective human experience. Bogdanov maintained that the foundation of objectivity lies in collective experience, that the objective nature of the material world consists of the fact that it exists not for the individual alone but for all. That is false, Lenin declared emphatically. The objective nature of the world lies in the fact that the world exists independently of everybody, and for this very reason objective truth does not depend on the experience of man and mankind. Truth is the faithful reflection of the objective world that exists independently of the experience of man and mankind. And, at the same time, it must be considered that the materialist, Marxist-Leninist understanding of experience itself is in direct contradiction with the subjectivist, idealistic understanding of the term. From the standpoint of materialism the experience of man reflects and takes into account the laws of the objective world by which it is conditioned, while from the standpoint of subjective idealism "experience" is only a "complex of sensations" which do not reflect the objective world.

The artist's experience of life undoubtedly has great importance in the way he creates, in his understanding of art and his reflection of reality. It is equally obvious that separate observations and impressions received by the artist during this study of reality are insufficient for the creation of a real work of art. That experience has to be generalized, pondered over, and worked on. The knowledge of life that the artist has acquired by his mind and feelings, has to be tested by life itself; only such a test can show how typical are the images and characters created by the artist, whether they are true reflections of reality. It is wrong to

conceive of the artistic image in realistic art merely as the result of a free grouping, a systematization by the artist of his own impressions of reality; it must give a faithful representation of reality in its essential connections and relations which have been understood and interpreted by the artist in the light of a definite outlook on the world, of definite social and aesthetic ideals.

Consequently, it is not true that artistic truth is derived from the fusion of the writer's experience with the experience of the reader; on the contrary, only by a faithful portrayal of reality in art can the fusion of the artist's experience with that of the collective for whom he works take place.

The denial of objective truth in art is directly linked with ignorance of the objective laws of artistic creation and the requirements of realism, laws that an artist must respect if he is to be a real educator of the people, "an engineer of the human souls."

The Communist Party is waging a decisive struggle against the idealistic cult of the personality, in all spheres of social life, including art. It demands that Soviet artists should base all their work on the people, that they should know and describe faithfully and artistically the life of working people, that they should make use of their art to educate the Soviet people in the spirit of Communism.



THE VAKHTANGOV THEATRE

TOWARDS the end of the year 1913 a number of young students living in Moscow decided to devote their leisure to serious theatre work. They formed a small group and to lead it invited an actor and producer of the Moscow Art Theatre, who though very young, had achieved a certain renown. His name was Yevgeni Bagrationovich Vakhtangov.

The group was first known as the "Students' Drama Studio." It was from that studio that the present Vakhtangov Theatre sprang.

Fortune had smiled on Vakhtangov's career in the theatre. On leaving a Moscow dramatic school in 1911 he secured an engagement at the Art Theatre. Within six months Stanislavsky proposed that he should organize a group of young actors and actresses belonging to the company and start working with them. Four years later Stanislavsky wrote to his favourite pupil: "You are the first fruit of our rejuvenated art. As teacher, producer and actor I love you for your talents; for the way you aspire to the *real* in art; for your ability to discipline yourself and others, to fight and overcome shortcomings. I am grateful to you for your great and patient work, for your convincedness and your modesty, and for the perseverance and purity with which you apply our general principles in art."

In the person of Vakhtangov the "Students' Drama Studio" acquired a gifted teacher of dramatic art, an educator in the fullest sense of the word.

By the outbreak of the October Revolution the members of the studio were quite ready for professional work. Several of Vakhtangov's pupils had acquired all the makings of capable producers and teachers of dramatic art.

However, money was needed to convert a modest amateur organization into a fully professional theatre; and that money was nowhere to be found.



Yevgeni Vakhtangov

Boris Zakhava, actor and producer at the Vakhtangov Theatre, worked with Yevgeni Vakhtangov since 1914. Zakhava is a People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. and a Stalin Prize winner. Among his productions are *Yegor Bulychev*, *The Sea-Gull*, *The Young Guard*, *Early Joys*, *Kirill Izoekov*, *The Badgers*, and *The Great Ruler*.

He has been in charge of the Shchukin Theatrical School since 1924.

There is no doubt that the Revolution saved the Vakhtangov studio from breaking up; at the best, only a few of its members would have found work in one theatre or another. The Soviet Government took the budding organization under its wing: the studio was suitably housed, material means were provided, and very soon it had won general recognition as a new theatre with a highly distinctive style of its own.

In 1920 Vakhtangov's company became a part of the Moscow Art Theatre, being known as the Third Studio, and a year later, on November 13, 1921, the new theatre-studio opened its doors to the public with Vakhtangov's production of Maeterlinck's *The Miracle of St. Anthony*. The Vakhtangov Theatre considers that day to be its official birthday.

The studio owed its successes after the Revolution not only to the material assistance it received from the Soviet Government but also, it need hardly be said, to that moral inspiration and stimulus that Vakhtangov and his pupils derived from the Revolution itself.

"How can the artist's heart remain untouched, how can his ear remain deaf and uncomprehending to the great cry that arises in the world," Vakhtangov wrote in his diary during those days, "now that the Revolution is scoring a red line across history by its hurricane course, a line that divides the world into 'before' and 'after'?"

The Revolution infused new content into the work of Vakhtangov and his pupils, arming them with the most advanced ideas of their times and awakening in their hearts the noblest and loftiest feelings. The men and women associated with Vakhtangov at that time take pride in the fact that he was one of the earliest among Russian intellectuals in the artistic world to side with the victorious people and to greet with joy the establishment of a Soviet government. "The artist has a great responsibility to bear," Vakhtangov declared in those days. This phrase determined the course that Vakhtangov was to take in his future work and served as the starting-point of the tempestuous development of his remarkable gifts.

Before the Revolution the Vakhtangov studio was a sort of monastery, a forcing-house. It was a place where people took refuge from life. Outside its walls raged a world war. Lives were being thrown away by the thousand. Russia's rulers were ignorant, arbitrary, stupid. Famine was imminent. But in the studio a group of people bound by close ties of friendship lived for art alone. Here was Vakhtangov, so sensitive and thoughtful, so wise and attentive.

And then one day it was Vakhtangov himself, the ruler of this cosy little nest, who declared firmly: "Enough of this! Open the windows! Let in some fresh air! Let in a breath of life!"

Vakhtangov wrote in his diary: "We have to understand at last that all the old world is finished with. Once and for all. No more tsars, no more landlords. No more capital. No more factory-owners. We must understand that we have swept all that clean away."

Vakhtangov produced only five plays after the Revolution. Three of them—Maeterlinck's *The Miracle of St. Anthony*, Chekhov's *The Marriage* and Carlo Gozzi's *Turandot*—he produced in his own studio; Strindberg's *Erik XIV*—in the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, and An-sky's *The Dibbuk* in the Jewish Habima Theatre. These five productions sufficed to establish Vakhtangov as one of the leading figures in the theatre of our times.

What were the main features of these five productions?

All Vakhtangov's work was infused with a spirit of true humanism, with a profound love and sympathy for the oppressed and for mankind in its struggle for liberation. Vakhtangov had a passionate faith in man and in the possibility for mankind to find happiness in life.

He understood that mankind could reach this happiness only by violent struggle and that the world was divided unequally between the exploited and the exploiters. And he employed his creative gift to glorify the exploited and to scourge and brand with the mark of shame those who exploited them. For each category he used different methods and scenic devices; he represented the exploited by stressing real human feelings, by straightforward, spontaneous methods of exposition; the exploiters he showed in caustic cartoons, in emphatic *mise en scènes* with graphically sharp forms which revealed the ghastly spiritual poverty and petrified feelings of that world where people are no more than marionettes.

Vakhtangov was fond of using the word "grotesque" to define the style of his productions. But his "grotesque" had nothing whatsoever in common with the primitive art of buffoonery with its crude exaggerations. For Vakhtangov, the grotesque meant an intelligent, delicate, graceful and profoundly true form of art replete with idea-content and possessing an enormous power of artistic generalization.

While noting the depth of content in Vakhtangov's productions the critics of those days invariably underlined their technical mastery and the unusual sharpness of scenic forms that were always vivid and distinctive. Every aspect of Vakhtangov's productions—every gesture, intonation, movement, pose, the grouping of the mass scenes and the slightest detail of the actor's play—was, as one critic wrote, "brought to such technical perfection that it is difficult to imagine that it can ever be surpassed." The plastic side of the actors' work in Vakhtangov's productions was a synthesis in which from thousands of possible variants was found—each time in a different way—the one variant that was most true and most appropriate.

Carlo Gozzi's *Turandot*, occupies a special place in his work.

To appreciate and understand fully today this last of Vakhtangov's creations—his swan song—it is necessary to remember the times and conditions in which this remarkable production was staged.

The Civil War was raging. On countless fronts the people of the young Soviet republic were defending with infinite heroism the power they had won and the future of their country.

Russia was cold and hungry. There was disorder. People were weary beyond the limits of human endurance, yet they made superhuman efforts to master their weariness and to emerge victorious. Victorious whatever the cost.

It was in that setting that work in the small Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre was at its height: Vakhtangov and his pupils were preparing the production of *Turandot*. They worked throughout the day and, when necessary, throughout the night. Joy in creation and the enthusiasm of youth made them forget how tired and hungry they were.

And so in the cold, ravaged, snow-clad Moscow of 1920-1921 work continued on the production of this old Italian *commedia dell'arte*.

Carefree laughter. Brilliant colours. A fantastic interplay of the comic and the grave. The sparkling flash of the actors' temperaments. Explo-

sions of laughter, seething passions—the most unusual events take place, possible only in the fantastic world of the theatre.

Vakhtangov, however, did not revive the external forms and methods of the masque. It was his intention to use modern means of theatrical expression to convey the essence of the Italian theatre of old, its spirit, its true nature.

Vakhtangov was suffering from cancer of the stomach and he knew that he had but two or three months to live. That is why he was in such a hurry to complete his work, why he worked on his production day and night. He meant to finish it at any price. And he succeeded.

On February 24, 1922, Vakhtangov supervised a rehearsal for the last time in his life. Although he had a high temperature at the time, he went on working. Clad in a fur coat, he sat in the theatre with his head tightly wrapped in a damp towel. It was four o'clock in the morning when the lighting was ready and the order: "Right through from beginning to end!" was heard.

On the next day the dress rehearsal was held. It was attended by the entire company of the Moscow Art Theatre and its associated studios, headed by Stanislavsky. But Vakhtangov was absent; he lay in bed. He did not see the results of his successful work. "During all twenty-three years of the existence of the Art Theatre there have been few such successes," Stanislavsky told the company on that day. "We have found what many other theatres have long looked for in vain."

In this way did Vakhtangov win his struggle for genuine art of the theatre, for a vivid, festive art and a high standard of skill. Though neither the subject nor the content of the play had anything in common with the revolutionary events of the times, the living heart of the present beat in Vakhtangov's production. And it was no mere chance that it was in a land straining every nerve in a struggle for the finest ideals of mankind that there should emerge an artist who, himself succumbing in a mortal struggle with a fatal illness, created a production brimming over with the joy of life, boldness and health and sunny laughter.

Gozzi's fairy-tale was only a vehicle for Vakhtangov. In the performance the players related more about themselves than about the life of Princess Turandot—about their youth, the happiness they derived from learning and mastering the art of the stage, their joy in creation, their love for life, for art, for the theatre, their faith in their country.

Turandot was on the repertoire of the Vakhtangov Theatre for nearly twenty years, being performed over a thousand times. It was performed also in Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Rostov-on-Don, Dniepropetrovsk, Kuznetsk, Nadezhdinsk and in many other places visited by the Vakhtangov company. Abroad, it was given in Berlin, Stockholm, Göteborg, Paris.

The audiences that packed Europe's theatres to watch this production saw in it a proof of the vitality of the Land of the Soviets.

The production of *Turandot* was not free from faults. It was marred by an over-refined aestheticism, by a certain finicalness. It bore traces of the influence of the formalistic school that prevailed in the theatre of those years. This was particularly true of the sets; the designer, Ignati Nivinsky, being strongly influenced by west-European expressionism.

After seeing *Turandot*, Nemirovich-Danchenko wrote in the visitors' book of the Third Studio: "Yes, the man who produced this play knows

what has to be demolished in the old and what has to be preserved. And he knows how to do it. . . . He will reject what is pure novelty, he will deal some hard knocks at us old 'uns but now he gives me a pleasure that is both bitter and sweet, fills me with joy as well as with awe. I am deeply grateful to this master and his colleagues."

Vakhtangov died on May 29, 1922. He was only thirty-nine.

It is often said that Vakhtangov died at the height of his powers. It would be truer to say that he died on the eve of the fulfilment of his gifts. Vakhtangov did not consider that any of his productions in his last period fully reflected his artistic credo or his main aims. He regarded them as necessary experiments, as preparation. Trial, experiment, study, laboratory work—such was the leit-motiv of all Vakhtangov's declarations in connection with his later productions.

Then why should Vakhtangov's "laboratory work" possess such power? Perhaps for the same reason that the pages in the sketch-books of some great painters are often more precious than large canvases by other artists.

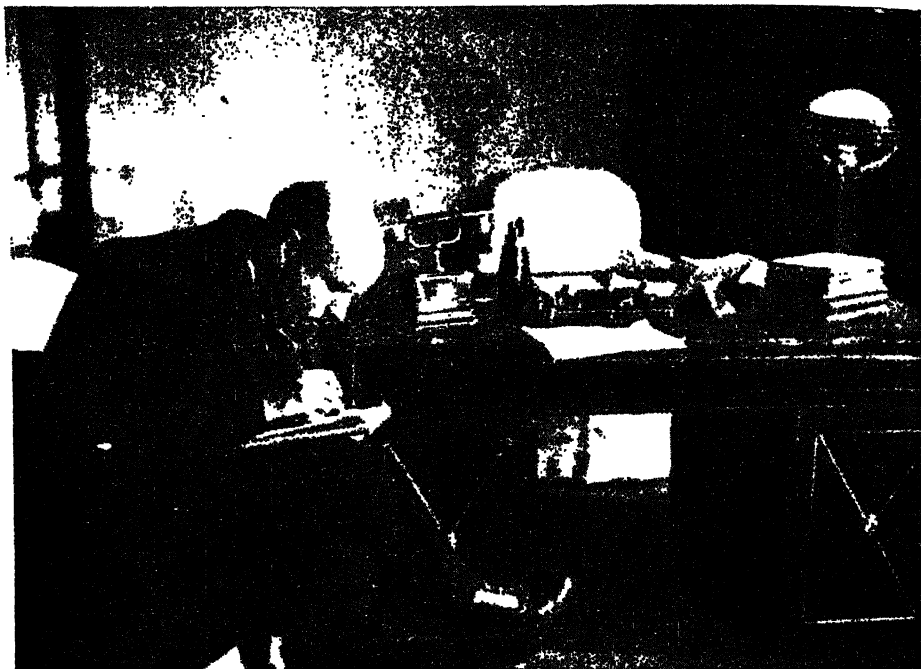
Vakhtangov was a faithful pupil of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. That is why the first basic principle of his school was something that he had inherited from his great teachers—the necessity of a profoundly realistic representation of *truth* on the stage, that truth in which lies the essence of the facet of life that is being shown.

Although he was a tireless innovator, always breaking new ground in art and creating new forms, Vakhtangov never took the barren path of pure experimentalism. He always used real life for the stuff of his productions; he worked in the name of life and for the sake of life. This was as true for the sunlit theatricality of *Turandot* as for the caustically grotesque figures of the bourgeoisie in *The Miracle of St. Anthony*, and in *The Marriage*, and for the monstrous nightmare of *The Dيبuk*, conjured up from the depths of his imagination.

The second main principle of Vakhtangov's school was that of the popular character of revolutionary art. As he wrote in his notes: "If an artist wants to make something *new*, something in the spirit of the revolutionary epoch, then he must make it 'together' with the people. Not for the people, or for the sake of the people but *together* with the people." And further: "What do I mean by the 'people'? Aren't we all people?" And to this he replied: "I mean the people who are making the Revolution."

Vakhtangov understood that if the artist works "together" with the people then he is also working *for* the people. Unless the artist shares the life of the people, he will never succeed in writing for the people; he will be supercilious in his relation to the people and his work will be of no use to them. Vakhtangov maintained that the artist should be the voice of his people, that he should be able "to snatch from the breast of the people the words locked in that breast" and return those words to the people. He considered that the artist should be the tribune of his epoch, the herald of the most advanced ideas of his times.

Vakhtangov's third principle was that the artist must possess an active, creative attitude to the life around him. He taught that to give a true picture of life the artist must, through the image he creates, also give his own attitude to the life that he is reproducing. This attitude must always be well-defined, sincere and passionate. The artist must have the power to convey to other people his love and his hate, his indignation and



B. V. Shchukin in the role of V. I. Lenin in *The Man with the Rifle*.

his enthusiasm, his disgust and his joy, his tenderness and his contempt. He has no right to remain dispassionate, indifferent to what he is portraying. A century has passed since the Russian revolutionary democrat Chernyshevsky taught that it is the task of art not only to reproduce reality but to "pass judgement" on it. All Vakhtangov's work was true to this principle. He had the idea in his very blood. He realized that true art always tries to help the progressive development of mankind, the refashioning of life. Therein lies the principle of art's ideological-creativity and its great significance as a power to effect change.

Vakhtangov was profoundly opposed to that commonplace naturalism which consists of a passive, contemplative, indifferent attitude to life. Such an attitude leads only to a drab, humdrum art deprived of any flights of thought and fancy.

He was equally opposed to that formalistic affectation and use of superficial effects which often accompany irresponsible flights of the imagination, extreme subjectivism, escapism, and a reluctance to grasp and comprehend real life.

While remaining deeply realistic, Vakhtangov's art always has a festive, vivid character and reaches a high romantic level. Vakhtangov's realism was, one might say, imbued with romanticism. But that romanticism was no retreat from life. On the contrary, its source was again the reality of life itself. It sprang from Vakhtangov's faith in life, in man.

Marxist-Leninist aesthetics teach us that revolutionary romanticism is a component of Socialist realism. Vakhtangov drew close to the practical application of that principle to his art.

Vakhtangov attached great importance to scenic form, technique and skill and was most exacting in that sphere. He taught that every play needed its own style of production. However, vivid expressiveness of form was never an end in itself for Vakhtangov; it was never more than the *means* of conveying the essence of a given work.

Thus, Vakhtangov passed on to his pupils, first, his requirement that they should subordinate their art to the principle of profound, living truth; second, that they should "listen to life" and "work together with the people, who made the Revolution"; third, that they should be passionate in passing their judgement on the life they represented and, lastly, that they should work unceasingly to improve their skill and seek vivid and expressive forms to bring out the essence of every play.

When Vakhtangov's pupils remained faithful to these principles, they were successful; whenever they neglected any one of them they failed. Only by a harmonious combination of these principles do we achieve a production that corresponds fully to the Vakhtangov school.

Under the circumstances the three-year period of hesitation and timid groping that marked the work of the studio after Vakhtangov's death was, perhaps, natural, but at length the company had a resounding success. the studio put on a play that was not only a new step in its life, it also played an important role in the development of the Soviet theatre as a whole. This was Lidia Seifullina's *Virineya*, a play based on her novel of the same name. Produced in 1925 by Alexei Popov, it was the first play by a Soviet author to be shown on the stage of the Vakhtangov studio. (By this time the studio had been separated from the Moscow Art Theatre and continued as the "State Academic Studio named after Yevgeni Vakhtangov.")

Turning to Soviet dramaturgy proved very fruitful. The play enjoyed a great success. It showed vividly the class struggle in the Russian country-side on the eve of the Revolution and in the early stages of the Civil War, and the complicated processes which were at work at that time in the minds of the Russian peasantry. For the first time on the Soviet stage, the progressive Bolshevik peasant, in the interpretation of Vakhtangov's best pupil, the actor Boris Shchukin, was depicted not in a stilted, primitive, paste-board



B. V. Shchukin. as Yegor Bulychev in the play *Yegor Bulychev*.

manner but true to life, realistically, full-bloodedly. The part of Virineya was played excellently by Yelizaveta Alexeyeva.

The role of Pavel Suslov, the Bolshevik in *Virineya*, was the first of a remarkable gallery of portraits of progressive Soviet people created by Shchukin. The series was crowned in 1937 by the actor's most important part (both on the screen and the stage)—that of Lenin in Nikolai Pogodin's play *The Man with the Rifle*.

The production of *Virineya* established Soviet reality firmly on the stage of the Vakhtangov Theatre; henceforth Soviet plays occupied the main part of its repertoire.

Among the best productions of Soviet plays at the Vakhtangov Theatre mention should be made, in addition to *Virineya*, of Leonid Leonov's *The Badgers*, a dramatization as a folk-tragedy of the novel about the clash between the class-consciousness of the working class and the anarchism of the proprietary middle-class element; Boris Lavrenyov's *Break-Up*, a play about the October rising of the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the way the best of the officers came over to the Revolution—produced on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the 1917 Revolution; Pogodin's *Tempo*, on the subject of the Soviet people's successes on the labour front during the First Five-Year Plan period, produced in 1930; Lev Slavin's *Intervention*—a lively production about international brotherhood and solidarity among the workers—produced in 1933, and proving to be one of Ruben Simonov's most distinguished productions; Pogodin's *The Aristocrats* (1935), which was about the rehabilitation of criminals through work as useful members of a Socialist society; Alexandr Afinogenov's *Distant Point* (1935), on the subject of the patriotism of ordinary Soviet people; and finally Pogodin's *The Man with the Rifle*, which in Ruben Simonov's production was a major event in the history of the Soviet theatre. In this play which was produced in 1937, Shchukin played the part of Lenin for the first time on the Soviet stage. Vakhtangov's dream of a real people's heroic theatre had been realized.

Shortly before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War the Vakhtangov Theatre staged a historical play by the Soviet dramatist Vladimir Solovyov entitled *Field-Marshal Kutuzov*.

Great as was the variety in subject-matter and style of these plays, their production on the stage of the Vakhtangov Theatre bore the stamp of one school, of the same canons of artistic taste, of a consistent method.

Perhaps the characteristic feature of a Vakhtangov Theatre production can best be defined as the combination of psychological truth in performance with romantic exaltation and sharp scenic expressiveness.

The performance of a play is a festive occasion, Vakhtangov used to say. This principle his pupils adopted heart and soul. A festive mood, an exalted style of acting, theatrical expressiveness, these are the main components of the realism of the Vakhtangov Theatre.

The company is aware of the fact that an exalted style and search for theatrical effects threatens to turn a virtue into a vice—into a stagey artificiality, a searching for studied effects, a shallow theatricality. That is exactly what happened to the work of the theatre when it was false to truth of life. But when the company drew on what is bright, interesting, thrilling and expressive in life itself, it invariably met with success.

The Vakhtangov Theatre is sometimes reproached for a predilection for the unusual and exceptional, for the unique. However, in its best work

the theatre succeeded in revealing what is typical in the exceptional and of discovering general, essential truths in individual cases that cannot be duplicated.

In presenting the above-listed plays the Vakhtangov Theatre was seen at its best in *The Man with the Rifle*, particularly in Shchukin's interpretation of Lenin. The chief merit of Shchukin's Lenin lay in the remarkable way the actor combined an authentic character portrayal and outward likeness with an enormous power of generalizing Lenin's ideas in artistic form. Shchukin's Lenin was an ordinary man and at the same time a leader of genius in whose person were concentrated the dreams, hopes and aspirations of millions. Shchukin's acting in this part was a triumph for the Vakhtangov school, an ideal expression of its principles and demands.

Among pre-war productions a special place in the history of the Vakhtangov theatre is occupied by Maxim Gorky's *Yegor Bulychev*. This play was first put on at the Vakhtangov Theatre in 1932 for the 40th anniversary of the start of Gorky's literary and public career. Bulychev was played by Boris Shchukin.

Thanks to remarkable acting by Shchukin and the rest of the company, the theatre fully succeeded in interpreting the profound essence of Gorky's great play which so powerfully and convincingly shows the foul rot that had set in in Russian capitalist society during the First World War.

The work on *Yegor Bulychev* gave the Vakhtangov Theatre company a serious schooling in proficiency in the method of Socialist realism as applied to dramatic art.

Outwardly the action of Gorky's play is confined within the narrow limits of the Bulychev house. All the events unfold in one family circle. But at the same time we are constantly aware of the fact that all the mutual relations and deeds of the characters in the play, their psychology, everything that happens to them,



N. N. Bubnov as Tsar Iyan the Terrible in *The Great Ruler*.



A. I. Goryunov as Monk Akaki in *The Great Ruler*.

are a reflection of vast social events which are taking place outside the walls of the house. In that lies Maxim Gorky's special skill.

This peculiarity of Gorky's dramaturgy was used by the producers as the basis of the scenic interpretation. In the psychological sketch of each role the producers sought to depict the effect on it of those gigantic processes which were undermining capitalism in Russia. The theatre aimed at making the main ideas of the play about the historic doom of capitalism lodge in the mind of the spectator as the natural and inevitable outcome of everything that happened on the stage.

The producer obtained this result not only by a deep reading of the text but by using all the other auxiliary means at the disposal of the theatre—a graphically expressive setting, clear-cut characteristics of the place in which the action unfolds, the use of music, song and dance, the reciting of poems that were fashionable at the time in which the action took place, the reading of extracts from contemporary newspapers, etc. All these effects in combination created the required atmosphere and provided an undertone to each scene and every line and to the play as a whole.

After the dress rehearsal of *Yegor Bulychov*, Gorky warmly thanked the actors and giving his impressions said: "I am pleasantly surprised by everything that the theatre itself has brought to this play. It seems to me that this form of co-operation between theatre and author is highly valuable."

During the Great Patriotic War a number of plays by Soviet authors were successfully produced at the Vakhtangov Theatre: *Oleko Dundich* by Rzheshesky and Kats, *Russian People*, a play by Konstantin Simonov about the fascist invasion of the Soviet Union, and Alexandr Korneichuk's *Front*, the theme of which was the art of war as practised by Soviet commanders.

The most successful productions after the war were: *The Great Ruler*, a historical play about Ivan the Terrible by V. Solovyov, which was produced in 1945 and is still in the repertoire; *The Young Guard*, a staging of Alexandr Fadeyev's famous novel, put on in 1947, and a play about the Donbas miners by A. Korneichuk entitled *Makar Dubrava*.

Of the theatre's more recent work the following productions may be mentioned: stage versions of Konstantin Fedin's novels *Early Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer*, the latter under the name *Kirill Izvekov*; *New Times* by G. Mdivani, a play about collective-farm life, and, finally, a successful revival of *Yegor Bulychov* with Sergei Lukyanov in the main role. Most of those taking part in the production of *Yegor Bulychov* were awarded Stalin prizes.

Of plays by contemporary foreign authors mention should be made of *Deep Are the Roots* by J. Gow and A. D'Usseau, which deals with the position of the Negro in American society, produced in 1947; *The White-haired Girl* by the Chinese dramatists Ho Ching-chih and Ting Yi, a play depicting the Chinese people's struggle for their independence, produced in 1952, and Gerhart Hauptmann's *Before the Dawn*, originally produced in 1941 and recently revived.

The Vakhtangov Theatre has produced relatively few classics, but among the most successful in this category are a programme consisting of one-act comedies by Mérimée, Schiller's *Intrigue and Love* (1930), Balzac's *The Human Comedy* (1934), Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1942), Turgenev's *On the Eve*.

The most brilliant of these productions was Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, produced by I. M. Rapoport in 1936 and still in the repertoire of the theatre. Elegance, music, rhythm, wit, humour—these are the main features of this merry vivacious production in which the Vakhtangov style finds full expression.

In 1932] Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was produced at the Vakhtangov Theatre but this production is to be remembered only as an example of its less successful work. Superficially the production was highly effective but it was empty of content and marked a retreat from the tradition of the Vakhtangov school.

The Vakhtangov Theatre's most recent production is Chekhov's *The Sea-Gull*, which has been staged in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the writer's death.

The company worked with great enthusiasm and love on the production of this captivatingly poetic play.

During the thirty-three years of the theatre's existence death has robbed the company of many gifted actors, among them Boris Shchukin.

However, these serious losses have not shaken the company. The Vakhtangov Theatre has had its own school for training actors since its foundation; now known as the Shchukin School, it is a constant source of supply of talented young actors. Most of the present Vakhtangov company were trained at this school.

Besides the best actors and actresses of the older generation such as Ruben Simonov, Cecilia Mansurova, Joseph Tolchanov, Anna Orochko, Yelizaveta Alexeyeva, Dina Andreyeva, Viktor Koltsov, and those who have joined the company from elsewhere, such as Sergei Lukyanov, Mikhail Astangov and Andrei Abrikosov, the company now has a number of young players, trained at the Shchukin School long after the death of Vakhtangov, who have won great popularity. They include Nikolai Gritsenko, Yuri Lyubimov, Galina and Larisa Pashkova, Lyudmila Tselikovskaya and Mikhail Ulyanov.

The Vakhtangov Theatre company is a strong one. It has energy, it has its own style, a splendid tradition, great experience. In short it has everything that is required for its growth and development.



B. M. Shukhmin and V. G. Koltsov in the roles of Dogberry and Verges in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

TAMARA MOTYLEVA

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRESSIVE LITERATURE

1

SOVIET critics have had many occasions to comment on the maturing of elements of Socialist realism in the work of progressive writers in foreign countries. However, the comments have been very general, with little or no attempt to study the theoretical aspects of the given problem.

Proletarian poetry dates back to the early independent actions of the working class in Western Europe, notably in Germany. The irreconcilable antagonism between labour and capital, and the great future of the working class, was the keynote of this poetry which, however, reflected not only the strength but also the shortcomings of the revolutionary labour movement of the time. And it was only very gradually, and not without difficulty, that it overcame petty-bourgeois illusions and utopian conceptions.

Even the most revolutionary among the 19th-century poets saw the impending Socialist revolution in very general and hazy perspective. The new positive hero that emerged in this poetry, the worker who was destined to be the stern judge and grave-digger of capitalist society, was drawn only in broad outline, though with sincerity and conviction. That applies even to the best work of Georg Weerth (his "The Cannon Founder" for instance), the first poet of the German proletariat. A quarter of a century later, Eugène Pottier, author of the *Internationale* and poet of the Paris Commune, depicted the revolutionary worker in all his might and grandeur, but that portrayal, too, was an abstract one.

And that abstractness, typical of much of the 19th-century proletarian poetry was from the historical standpoint inevitable. For there was as yet too little material which the writer could use to express the Socialist ideas in terms of contemporary life and embody them in concrete images.

The democratic theme in West-European literature grew stronger in later years, with the development of the labour movement. But the evil influence of reformism greatly hampered the consistent advocacy in literature of the workers' cause. At the turn of the century, most of the books that

took their theme from the life of the people were far removed from the revolutionary trend of Weerth and Pottier.

It is not fortuitous, of course, that the founder of Socialist realism in world literature was Maxim Gorky, the great *Russian* writer. His work was expressive of the rapid development of the workers' political understanding, and of the mounting militancy of the Russian proletariat at the time when the focal point of the revolutionary movement had shifted to Russia. For it was in Russia, in the opening years of the century, that the liberation movement of the working class first achieved that high level which made it possible consistently to uphold the principle of partisanship not only in politics, but in every sphere of ideology. Soviet historians of literature have emphasized that the demands which Lenin addressed to writers in his famous article, "The Party Organization and Party Literature," contained new features compared with the requirements which Engels had in his day formulated for the Socialist-trend novel. Engels regarded it permissible for Socialist writers who exposed the contradictions of bourgeois society and denounced that society "not to suggest any definite solution and even, at times, not to range themselves openly on either side." Life placed new tasks, and presented new possibilities, for revolutionary literature.

Lenin's principle of partisanship in literature was the aesthetic basis on which Gorky's great talent matured—Gorky's *Mother* is an outstanding example. Guided by that principle, and reflecting the mighty upswing of the mass liberation movement in the years of the first Russian revolution, Gorky laid the foundations for Socialist realism. That was a great forward step in the development of world literature and art generally.

In his *Talks with the Youth* (1934), Gorky pointed out that writing imbued with the spirit of Socialist realism can originate only when the author observes "facts of a Socialist character" in the life around him. When he was working on *Mother*, he observed many such "facts of a Socialist character," and they reacted beneficially on his talent. He saw them in the Russian revolutionary movement, and in the growing influence of Socialist ideas which, by taking a firm grip on the minds of the people, acquired material force.

An examination of his principal novels of the period between the appearance of *Mother* and 1917 provides convincing evidence that the writer who takes the Socialist philosophy as his guide and is closely associated with the revolutionary vanguard of his people, can advance to Socialist realism even prior to the triumph of the Socialist revolution in his country.

A very valuable contribution to the progressive literature of the world was made in the early years of the century by Martin Andersen Nexø. His epic *Pelle the Conqueror* (1906-10) is a comprehensive and strikingly true picture of the development of the Danish labour movement. But Nexø lived and worked under conditions different from Gorky's and his advance to Socialist realism was much slower and much more difficult.

The general crisis of capitalism powerfully stimulated the development of revolutionary consciousness. A vivid reflection of this was the appearance of Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire* (1916). It owes its impact not only to its masterly exposure of imperialism, but also to its passionate faith in the

people, in their ability to eliminate unjust wars and the causes that give rise to them. Barbusse's next novel, *Clarté*, written in 1919, is an open appeal to the people to reconstruct life along Socialist lines.

The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia inspired in the oppressed and exploited masses everywhere confidence in their strength and was productive of profound changes in the thinking of many intellectuals. The best among the "masters of culture" were quick to appreciate its historical justice, and the heritage of such outstanding exponents of critical realism as Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Theodore Dreiser and Heinrich Mann, is of immense significance for present-day progressive literature.

Eminent writers of many countries came out in complete solidarity with the October Revolution. Among the first to do so were such artists and fighters as Henri Barbusse and Martin Andersen Nexö. Others in this category were Johannes R. Becher (Germany), Paul Vaillant-Couturier (France), Stanislav Kostka Neumann (Czechoslovakia), Christo Smirnen-ski (Bulgaria). Together with other revolutionary-minded authors who came to the fore in the 'twenties and 'thirties, they were the pioneers of Socialist realism in their respective countries.

The emergency of a Socialist state in Russia, the foundation of the Third International and the rapid spread of the Communist movement throughout the world, were all "facts of a Socialist character" which, already in the early years of the Revolution, exerted a powerful influence on the thinking and creative work of forward-looking writers.

But in many countries the development of revolutionary literature encountered diverse obstacles, some of them very formidable ones. Working-class writers had to resist the influence of the reactionary ideology and imperialist "culture" that held sway in their countries. But this was not the only difficulty. One of the infantile maladies of progressive literature in the 'twenties and 'thirties was schematism and black-and-white drawing of characters with scant attention to their inner life and interests. This was due, in part, to lack of experience, to the newness of the subject-matter, to the influence of the decadent, and essentially anti-humanitarian, bourgeois, art of the imperialist era. But it was due also to the persistence of a nihilistic attitude to the classical heritage. Anxious to give as truthful as possible a picture of the social evils of their time, the young revolutionary writers were not always able to avoid the pitfalls of naturalistic objectivism. The influence of expressionism, surrealism and other decadent trends which prevailed in bourgeois art was not infrequently felt in the work of talented, and essentially progressive, authors. Even such outstanding artists as Becher and Aragon found their way to Socialist realism only through inner conflict and by constant searching.

But all these obstacles and impediments notwithstanding, Socialist realism steadily hewed a way for itself in the revolutionary literature of the 'twenties and early 'thirties. Henri Barbusse, in his *True Tales* gave a penetrating picture of the inhuman and barbarous nature of imperialism and of the growing influence of Communist ideas among the workers. Nazim Hikmet, already in the 'twenties, laid the groundwork for the revolutionary poetry of the East. Giovanni Germanetto described in his biographical *Memoirs of a Barber*, the ideological development of an Italian Communist. Erich Weinert, poet and fighter, brought out in his verse all the stress and tension of the class struggle in pre-Hitler Germany.

Ivan Olbracht, in his *Anna the Proletarian*, was the first in Czech literature to make the revolutionary worker the central figure of a novel. Anna Seghers, in her early novel *Fellow-Travelers*, gave a powerful presentation of the international solidarity of revolutionaries united under the banner of Communism. These, of course, are widely different books, but common to all of them are the distinct features of Socialist realism—fidelity, historical concreteness and the depiction of life in its revolutionary development.

Those features are present also in a number of other works of the 'thirties. Among them are the poems of Johannes Becher; the anti-fascist novels of Willi Bredel (*Ordeal*), and Anna Seghers (*Rescue* and *The Seventh Cross*); the story of the development of the labour movement in Czechoslovakia told in Marie Majerova's novels (*Siren* and *Mining Ballad*), M. Pujmanova's novel *At the Crossroads*, which brought out acute social contradictions that existed in the bourgeois republic of Czechoslovakia; the novels of Wanda Wasilewska, with their vivid picture of the liberation struggle waged by the Polish workers of town and country against the pro-fascist Pilsudski regime; inspired poetry of Bulgaria's national hero Nikola Vaptsarov. And, of course, the unforgettable *Notes From the Gallows* by Julius Fučík, which appeared during the Second World War and has since remained a superb specimen of Socialist realism in foreign literature.

2

The great changes in the international situation following the Second World War stimulated further advances in the progressive literature of the capitalist countries.¹ The most important of these, perhaps, was the substantial increase in the number of progressive writers, coupled with greater maturity and higher craftsmanship standards. Today we can speak of an international progressive literary movement in which new names constantly come to the fore, and in which the method of Socialist realism is rapidly gaining ground and recognition.

This progressive literature is becoming richer and much more multi-form. In the 'twenties and 'thirties Socialist realism was confined in the main, to verse writing (Becher, Weinert, Hikmet, Smirnenski, Vaptsarov), and to documentary and semi-documentary prose writing (Barbusse's *True Tales*, Fučík's *Articles on the Soviet Union*, Germanetto's autobiographical novel, Vaillant-Couturier's *Sketches*), and only slowly spread to the novel (Olbracht's *Anna the Proletarian*, Bredel's early work, etc.). In contrast there are now numerous works, and not only in poetry, but in prose and dramaturgy as well, that follow the principles of Socialist realism and attain a high level of craftsmanship. Among these are the finest historical novels of Howard Fast, whose bold exposure of the evils of the past has such a topical ring in our day; verse for children by the Italian poet Gianni Rodari, which convey the progressive ideas of our time in terms understandable to children; Nazim Hikmet's *Song of Love*, which brings out in folk-lore imagery the creative potentialities of the working people, and many other works widely different in form and subject-matter.

¹ The development of literature in the People's Democracies is a special problem which we shall deal with in a later article—Ed.

In the 'twenties and 'thirties, progressive writers took their themes chiefly from the revolutionary struggle and the everyday life of the worker. Books exposing the rulers of the imperialist world were a rarity. Today the progressive writer considers it his duty to depict all aspects of the life of society in order to influence and change that life. Every important development in the life of his people deserves to be noted and recorded. In the words of Howard Fast: "Today, the writer who practises Socialist realism sees the world in its whole process of change. . . . Proletarian literature does not, as was vulgarly proposed by certain narrow sectarians in the 'thirties, seek for its subject-matter only in the proletariat; rather does the proletarian world outlook claim the whole of the world and all of experience as its literary material."

The progressive artist tries to fathom the logic of the history of his country and see its future in proper perspective. And that explains the heightened interest in historical themes and the deep concern for the future of America, which is so characteristic of Fast's work.

Progressive literature in the capitalist countries has produced epical works in which are portrayed diverse strata of society. In them we find an interpretation of crucial development in the life of the nation and of the role played by the various classes and parties in major social conflicts that shape the destiny of the whole people. In this category of novels which pose problems of national significance belong Jorge Amado's *The Land of the Golden Fruit* and *Red Dawn*; Jack Lindsay's *Betrayed Spring*, with its picture of mounting class conflict in post-war Britain and its meaningful subtitle, "A Novel of the British Way." This new trend in contemporary progressive literature has found its supreme expression in Louis Aragon's monumental work, *The Communists*.

Prior to the Second World War, it was not common to find a prose writer choosing the revolutionary movement for his theme and treating it with the insight and skill it merits. Anna Seghers' *The Seventh Cross* was in that respect an exception. But recent productions of progressive writing, the books of Aragon, Fast, Stil, Amado, Lindsay, for example, contain a wide array of characters, often very painstakingly drawn, and shown in their development, in their multiform relations with the world in which they live. This more profound treatment of the psychological factor is one of the salient, and gratifying, signs of the maturity of progressive literature.

That maturity, both in idea-content and craftsmanship, is intimately associated with a heightened interest in the problems of aesthetics and theoretical aspect of the writers' work.

In these past few years there have been several books and articles from well-known pens in which the fundamental theoretical problems of modern art are posed. The list includes Howard Fast's *Literature and Reality* (1950), André Stil's *Towards Socialist Realism* (1952), Louis Aragon's *Monsieur Duval's Nephew* (1953), and a collective work entitled *Essays on Socialist Realism and the British Cultural Tradition*. Though some of their propositions are debatable, these contributions are profoundly correct in general conception and can serve as a criterion of the extent to which Socialist realism has become part of the thinking of the progressive writer of our age.

It stands to reason that the concept "progressive literature" is much broader than the concept "Socialist realism," for it embraces also critical

realism. It would be impermissible scholasticism and over-simplification to make a gulf between Socialist realism and critical realism.

The development of progressive, democratic literature in the present-day bourgeois world has by no means been uniform. In this age of popular mass struggle against imperialist aggression, books widely dissimilar in style and method can be of definite value to the progressive cause if they give a faithful, or even basically faithful, picture of reality.

The success achieved by Socialist realism in the capitalist countries must under no circumstances be understood to mean that all the potentialities of critical realism have been exhausted. It should not be difficult to list a whole number of novels which are basically truthful though they give a far from complete, indeed truncated presentation of bourgeois realities, or even of some of its aspects. Mitchell Wilson's *Live with Lightning* is a typical example. Even when such books fail to draw all the ideological conclusions, they hold the reader's interest and are undoubtedly of value to the working class.

Left-wing French writers and critics emphasize that the method of Socialist realism is no impediment to co-operation with writers of other political or aesthetic views in the solution of pressing social problems. Quite the contrary, André Stil makes the point that by applying the method of Socialist realism the progressive artist can discern features of cultural life that might in some way contribute to human progress, and find common ground with those writers whom the very logic of events brings into the peace camp.

Socialist realism is not a dogma or a fixed pattern. It is a method based on definite general principles in the selection and treatment of subject-matter drawn from life. It is a method that acquires different features in different countries and develops in conformity with the historically-shaped peculiarities and progressive traditions of the national culture.

What, then, are the objective pre-conditions for the emergence of Socialist realism in the literature of any given country? In their general form, they were defined by Alexandr Fadeyev in the discussion he had with German writers in 1948: "There is a basis for Socialist realism wherever the revolutionary proletariat has become conscious of its might and has a Communist vanguard." Certainly, that possibility does not always, and not immediately, become a reality. Its translation into actual fact is determined by the social and cultural conditions in each particular country.

The development of progressive literature furnishes ample corroboration of the Marxist-Leninist thesis that every nation, big or small, possesses its own special features and traits, and makes its own contribution to the treasure-house of world culture. The momentous struggle of the peoples against imperialism has already produced many a great talent, and not only in the big countries, but in the smaller nations as well. Denmark gave the world Martin Andersen Nexø, and Chile Pablo Neruda, a poet of world-wide fame. And a study of the work of leading writers who draw their inspiration from the progressive ideology of our age will show that in every country Socialist realism has its own special features, its own national form.

Language, as we know, is the basic element of what makes up the form of any national culture. But in a broader sense its form implies intimate asso-

ciation with the country, its people, and traditions. The progressive literature of a country reflects the peculiar features of that country's life, character and cultural heritage. And for that reason militant writers who are closely kindred with Soviet writers in spirit, outlook and aesthetic principles have produced works which in many respects are dissimilar to the books of their Soviet colleagues. That applies in full measure to such outstanding poets as Pablo Neruda and Nazim Hikmet. Even in translation, one feels the distinguishing national character of their verse, expressed not only in subject-matter, but in language, too, in imagery and metaphors.

Progressive writers draw generously on the democratic cultural heritage of their people. Part of that heritage is the folk-lore of the country and the need to study and assimilate it has been very convincingly shown by Jack Lindsay in his article "Some Aspects of Socialist Realism." Elements of Negro folk-lore play no small part in the artistic fabric of Lloyd Brown's *Iron City*.

The method of Socialist realism offers the artist exceptional opportunities for creative initiative, and a very wide range of forms in which to clothe his work. We have confirmation of this in the work of every writer who applies the principle of Socialist realism. Despite all the difference in subject-matter and form, there are features common to all their works.

3

Socialist realism is based on the principle of truthful depiction of reality in all its historic concreteness and revolutionary change. This requires that the artist devote special attention to those forces of society that ensure its progress. The artist must be able to show the onward march of history as a movement of the masses themselves. For the concept that the popular masses play a decisive part in human progress is basic to Socialist realism.

Reactionary bourgeois literature, with its glorification of the savagery and vandalism of imperialist "supermen" is imbued with bestial hatred for the worker, with fear of the working masses. In contrast, the progressive writer in the capitalist world endeavours to bring out the inherent strength of the working people and the great prospects that open up before them.

Nazim Hikmet has epitomized in one of his poems the strength and vigour of the people which is the creator of all the material values of the world, and which is destined to become its master.

The role of the masses in history is the dominant theme of all the writing of Howard Fast. In his historical novels and descriptions of present-day life alike, it is the common people, the makers of history, who hold the centre of the scene. And Fast shows them as a potent force capable of actively resisting imperialist oppression, racism and hate-mongering. In that sense *Freedom Road* can be regarded as the forerunner of his *Peekskill: U.S.A.*, a story of latter-day America.

One of the very best things to come from his pen is *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, a merciless denunciation of the foul system of bourgeois justice, a book that skilfully uses factual material to show how gross violation of elementary human rights has become an integral part of the American machine of government. But Fast does more than that—his book is a paean to the strength and rectitude of the labouring folk of America.

Aragon's *The Communists* undoubtedly represents a new departure, for in it, for the first time in French literature, the vanguard of the nation, its heart and brain, the Communist Party, is shown as the motive force of the people. *The Communists* is a book of great vision and majestic scope.

Aragon's characters are shown from various angles, but always we feel the unity of their personal and social interests. He has put immense emotional impact and human warmth into his description of the close ties that link so many Frenchmen to the party that guides them—the Communist Party. And it is from this galaxy of individual portraits, of rank-and-file Communists in the factories, the army, in the underground movement, or courageously facing the reactionary tribunal, that there gradually emerges the picture of the Communist Party, a party which from the very first days of the Nazi occupation was able to organize the Resistance in the chief industrial centres of the country.

The book leads the reader to the inescapable conclusion that all the finest elements of the French nation must in the end make common cause with the Communists.

André Stil's trilogy, *The First Clash*, differs in many ways, and primarily in its theme, from Aragon's great novel. But here, too, the picture is of the Communist Party uniting men and women of honest mind and decent feeling. The struggle waged by the Communists in behalf of peace, against the aggressive policy of American imperialism, fully accords with the vital interests of Frenchmen of diverse beliefs and professions.

Socialist realism is based on the principle of depicting reality in its revolutionary development. And that applies, naturally, not only to social phenomena, but to the personal life of the individual. For in the human soul, in the thinking and psychological make-up of many rank-and-file workers of the capitalist world, there is taking place a process of development—the transition from ignorance to knowledge, from narrow-minded illusions and prejudices to political understanding, from indifference and passivity to militancy.

This principle that life must be depicted in its revolutionary development provides tremendous scope for creative initiative, both in the selection of characters and in the shaping of the fabric of the story. The chief characters in *The Diplomat*, Aldridge's talented novel, are not Communists. But the whole logic of the story shows how sincere-minded men ultimately range themselves on the side of the people and their just cause, and join in the battle for peace.

It can be said that every work of literature which faithfully reflects the social struggle of our days and brings out the unconquerable will of the working people to win freedom and happiness, leans towards the method of Socialist realism.

The growth of class consciousness and the maturing revolutionary sentiment of the working people are saliently brought out in the work of progressive writers of many different countries. One example is the novel *When the Fields Awake* by the Indian writer Krishan Chandra. His Raghu Rao, a downtrodden peasant lad, becomes an ardent revolutionary, and the process of that conversion is shown with keen insight.

Another example is *Quiet Hills*, a novel by Sunao Tokunaga. It is the story of the post-war struggles of the Japanese workers, and more

specifically of Furukawa Jiro, a young worker demobilized from the army whose advance to class consciousness is typical of the process taking place in present-day Japan.

The main thing in Socialist realism is assertion and championing of the new, ability to show that the new possesses invincible might. At the same time, Socialist realism, being a truthful reflection of life itself, is a powerful *negation of the old*, the obsolete. The progressive world outlook and understanding of the laws of social development enable the finest writers of our day to expose the exploiting classes, to show that they are doomed even in those countries where they still represent a formidable force.

In this aspect of his work, the contemporary progressive writer can draw on the rich heritage of the outstanding exponents of critical realism, a heritage which he develops in new conditions. In making a thorough study of realities, he brings to light all the foulness and depravity of bourgeois relationships and morals, giving a truthful picture of the parasitic decay of the bourgeoisie in the final stage of its existence. But he must do more than simply record that process of degeneration, as was done in the early part of the century by such bourgeois realist writers as Galsworthy and Thomas Mann: the progressive author must reveal the historic roots of the process.

The leading exponents of 19th-century critical realism, Stendhal and Balzac, Dickens and Thackeray, regarded capitalism as a gruesome inevitability. They could not, of course, clearly see the prospect of its doom. Unlike them, the writer of today who lives in a bourgeois society proceeds from that prospect in his description of the ruling classes.

The masters of the capitalist world are shown in the works of progressive writers only as temporary masters, whose power is as unstable as it is brutal; they appear before us as living corpses, as men condemned by history to certain defeat and ignominy.

Contemporary progressive literature contains a very wide range of psychological portraits of representatives of the bourgeoisie. They have one profoundly typical feature in common: uncertainty and fear of the future, and fear of the people. That is conveyed in such opposites as the factory owner Lowell, in Fast's *Clarkton*, and Wisner, in Aragon's *The Communists*.

Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* is a trenchant criticism of the bourgeoisie. In fact, exposure of the evils of the capitalist system is the basic line of the novel which, incidentally, transcends critical realism. John West, the millionaire who achieves "power without glory," falls prey to unaccountable fears. It is not only a case of a senile freebooter coming to realize his moral bankruptcy (as Frank Cowperwood in Dreiser's *The Stoic*). It is fear of a very real and potent enemy—the revolutionary working class.

And Hardy's portrayal of West, an old man seized with panicky fear, is symbolic, in its way, of moribund capitalism approaching its inglorious end.

This book of the gifted Australian author is added proof that only the writer who espouses Socialist realism, or even some of its elements, can creatively continue the traditions of critical realism and mercilessly and effectively expose the exploiting class.

The contemporary progressive writer chooses his themes from different aspects of life, but he is always an active fighter for a better future for mankind and a participant in the peoples' movement for liberation.

It goes without saying that in many of the works of progressive writers in capitalist countries, Socialist realism not infrequently is incomplete and immature, being combined with alien, even hostile, elements. There are shortcomings and defects attributable to imperfect craftsmanship and—it is important to remember—to the very real difficulties that attend the development of Socialist realism in the capitalist world. But that is not the main thing; the main thing is that Socialist realism *does* exist, either in the form of mature, finished productions, or in the form of a tendency, or rudiments, in the literatures of capitalist countries. And it is by applying the method of Socialist realism that progressive writers can make their contribution to the struggle for peace, democratic freedoms and a brighter future for mankind.



OUTSTANDING WRITER
OF NEW KOREA

LEE Gi Yeng, the author of the novel *Land* which has recently appeared in Russian translation, is one of the founders of modern Korean literature. He began writing at a mature age, publishing his first story, *A Secret Letter to a Brother*, in 1924, when he was nearly thirty.

The son of a poor peasant, Lee Gi Yeng was born into a life of want and hardship. His family could not afford to give him more than an elementary schooling.

The future author and distinguished patriot was fifteen when the Japanese imperialists seized Korea and added to the tyranny of the local landlords, weighing so heavy on the shoulders of the people, a brutal regime of national oppression.

How did people live elsewhere? Was life everywhere as cruel and unjust? These questions gave the young Lee Gi Yeng no rest as he mused over the destinies of his people and his country, and a passionate desire to find answers to these questions impelled the peasant boy to leave the poverty-ridden little village in Chhunchhon Province, where he had been born and set out in search of the truth.

For several years he wandered from place to place. He made his way on foot through the length and breadth of Southern Korea, and everywhere he found his people reduced to the most abject poverty, groaning under the foreign yoke.

In March 1919 the toiling folk of Korea, inspired by the October Revolution in Russia which instilled new courage in men and women yearning for freedom, rose up in arms against the Japanese. The events of that memorable month made a deep impression on Lee Gi Yeng, awakening in him an insuppressible desire to do his share in his people's struggle for national liberation. But what did he have to oppose to the formidable enemy wielding undivided power? He must first acquire knowledge. Since the Japanese invaders had closed practically all schools in Korea, he went to Japan, where he studied Western literature at the Waseda University in Tokyo and at the same time read the Russian classics and Soviet writers. Maxim Gorky made the deepest impression on him.

"It was Gorky who inspired me to try to fathom the destiny of my people and to write about them," Lee Gi Yeng said later. "Gorky is my teacher and mentor."



When the earthquake of 1923 hit Japan, the Koreans in Tokyo became the victims of mob violence. They were beaten and even killed as being responsible for the natural disaster. Lee Gi Yeng was forced to interrupt his studies and return to his native land.

Here he witnessed the first glimmers of a new era that was setting in. The working class was resorting to strike action more and more often. In the villages there were clashes between the landlords and the peasants. And it was precisely these social stirrings that supplied the topics for Lee Gi Yeng's first literary efforts.

In 1925, together with Han Sel Ya and other progressive writers, Lee Gi Yeng founded the Korean Association of Proletarian Writers which proclaimed as its aim the creation, on the basis of a critical assimilation of the national literary tradition and folk art, of an advanced, modern literature serving the cause of the people's liberation. One of the most active members of the Association, he wrote a number of stories (*Poor People*, *The People's Cause*, *Weng Chi Su*, *The Ethics of Fools*, *Paper Mill Settlement*, *Chung Do Ryun the Peasant*, and others) in which he depicted the monstrous injustices of the life of the downtrodden Korean peasant and sought to sustain the spirit of revolt against oppression. Next came the novel *Homeland* (1929-1932), exposing the Japanese colonial policy and showing the full bitterness of the lot of the Korean peasant groaning under the double yoke of the feudal landlords and the foreign imperialists. Lee Gi Yeng was the first author in Korean history to write about ordinary peasants risen to active struggle.

The activities of Lee Gi Yeng and his friends could not escape the notice of the Japanese occupation authorities, and in 1934 some eighty of the Association's members, Lee Gi Yeng among them, were thrown in prison.

When Lee Gi Yeng was released nearly two years later, it was only to be placed under strict police surveillance. He had to settle in a village in Kanwong Province, but there too he continued writing, completing the novel *Study of Man* and several other works.

After the liberation of Korea by the Soviet Army in August 1945, Lee Gi Yeng took his place among the foremost fighters for a new, democratic Korea. He was elected member of the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea and president of the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time he took an active part in the work of the Association of Writers and Art Workers of the Korean People's Republic. In August 1946 he visited the U.S.S.R. as the head of the first Korean cultural workers' delegation to that country. In 1948 he was elected to the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean People's Democratic Republic and later to the Presidium of that body. Since 1950 he has been a member of the World Peace Council.

His first novel, written in free Korea, Lee Gi Yeng dedicated to that signal development in the country's history, the land reform. Entitled *Rebirth*, it was followed by the author's most important work, the novel *Land*, in which the democratic reforms effected in the Korean People's Democratic Republic find vivid reflection. Lee Gi Yeng's later novel, *The 38th Parallel*, treats of the Korean people's selfless struggle against imperialist aggression. But *Land* continued to occupy a place of signal

importance in Lee Gi Yeng's work and within a short time it became one of the most popular books in Korea.¹

The action of the novel takes place within a small compass of time—one year. This year, however, is replete with tremendous changes in the life of the Korean people, and the author traces them with great veracity. The canvas he has produced affords a moving panorama embracing the most momentous pages of Korea's modern history.

The main character in the novel is the peasant Kuak Ba Wi. The author introduces the reader to him at a time when his life is an endless round of toil and privation. We see him at the landlord's hulling mill.

"Ten years of Kuak Ba Wi's life passed in toil and constant battle with adversity. One might think a man could not work without respite for ten years without having anything to show for it. Yet Kuak Ba Wi was left empty-handed. In the course of the year he ran mountains of the master's grain through the hulling mill, but himself he got but a handful. As he thought of all this, Kuak Ba Wi wanted to give it all up and leave his master, try his luck once more. But he could not pluck up courage to do so; apart from his calloused hands he had nothing—neither home nor family. . . ."

There had been a time when Kuak Ba Wi entered the lists against poverty and tried to make his way by renting a small plot of land. That was after the death of his father, when he was left the sole bread-winner of the family. . . . But sharecropping, for all his efforts to raise three crops of rice a year, gave him nothing—of the harvests he brought in hardly anything remained.

In order to help Kuak Ba Wi, his sister, Bung I, had decided to hire out for several years to a spinning mill-owner and use the money to build a decent home and enable her brother to get on his feet and marry. The mill-owner's agent, however, deceived the girl, who discovered that she barely managed to earn enough to feed herself. Besides, Kuak Ba Wi had a clash with the Japanese overseer and was sent to prison for six years. When he finally came out it was only to find that his mother and sister had died. Now he left his native village and wandered from one part of the country to another, hiring out as a land labourer.

Such was the early life of the hero of the novel. Was there a force that could give him a new lease of life, free him from the crushing yoke that ground him down? Injustice and hopeless poverty held sway all around him. And he knew no one who could have helped to dispel his ignorance and guide him on to the path of struggle.

At last the long-awaited freedom came. The Koreans for the first time heard the words "the people's power," and "democracy."

Liberation of the country brought in its train a democratic recasting of life. In the North of Korea the power passed into the hands of People's Committees and a land reform was carried out.

Kuak Ba Wi, too, received a plot of land, taken from the holdings of the landlord, his former master. If irrigated, it made good rice land.

The central theme in the novel is the development of the character of Kuak Ba Wi. Through him we see how the new life not only gave material security to the formerly dispossessed Korean peasant, but also steeled his

¹ Now that it has appeared in Russian translation, it has won popularity with the broad Soviet reading public as well.

character, instilled in him a will to fight and faith in his own powers and the powers of the collective. The one-time land labourer no longer thinks only of his own immediate interests, but also, and primarily, of how to turn the uncultivated and swamp lands around the village into fertile rice fields in the common interests of all.

The new life brings Kuak Ba Wi personal happiness too. With great warmth the author tells the story of his love for Sung Ok, a young woman whose life has been as hard and bitter as his.

Sung Ok had been sold to a wealthy landowner to redeem the debts owed by her father, a penniless peasant. Even now, when things have changed and she has become a full-fledged member of society, she cannot believe that Kuak Ba Wi really wants to marry her in spite of her "disgrace." On his part Kuak Ba Wi does not find the courage to ask for her hand, still considering himself the rightless land labourer he had been, the lowest of the low.

It takes much time for these simple-hearted people to get accustomed to the idea that they now are the masters of their own destinies. The subtle psychological picture Lee Gi Yeng gives of them and their relationship is a tribute to his talent as an artist able to fathom the depths of the human soul.

The novel shows how the land reform has made the labour of the liberated peasants a joy, spurring them to greater effort. Virgin soil is turned over, and a canal is dug to carry water to the fields. An organization of the Party of Labour is set up in the village, and among the first to join it we see Kuak Ba Wi and his wife, Sung Ok.

The new, democratic state makes the welfare of the toiling masses its vital concern. The new lands put under cultivation by the peasants are exempted from the agricultural tax for three years. The formerly homeless peasant Kuak Ba Wi finds himself in a position to build a house of his own in the very first year of freedom. And he and his wife willingly donate part of their harvest to the state construction fund, "the fund making for the prosperity of their motherland."

The new life, however, did not become established without struggle. The sinister forces representing the past would not leave the historical scene without resistance. And we see the rich peasant Ko Ben Sang persuading his grandson to set fire to the sheds where the rice harvest has been stored. Under the cover of night the enemy creeps up to the building; now he has only to set a match to the thatched roof for the rice to be destroyed by flames and the rich peasant put into a position when he can sell his rice at treble the existing price. The vigilance of the young patriot Dong Su, however, prevents the crime from being committed, and the incendiary is caught and committed for trial.

The provocations of the class enemy are powerless to intimidate the toiling peasants, for life is ever on the advance. A project proposed by Kuak Ba Wi to drain the swamps and to build an irrigation canal is carried out. Under the leadership of the Party of Labour the once poverty-stricken village gradually launches out on the path of Socialist development.

A highly important role is played in this by the mutual-aid groups—these forerunners of the collective farm. Kuak Ba Wi is elected chairman of the local group as the recognized organizer of the peasants in the struggle to build a new life.

With meticulous care, not omitting a single essential detail, Lee Gi Yeng depicts the birth and consolidation of the new, democratic way of life and the accompanying changes in the destinies and the very character of the people. While portraying the new life of the Korean village, the novel is at the same time a manual for the builders of this life. No wonder *Land* is one of the most popular books in Korea. Many of its readers indeed find their own lives reflected in those of Kuak Ba Wi and Sung Ok.

With an economy of line and colour that reveals the experienced master, Lee Gi Yeng paints character portraits that give us a deep insight in the lives of his heroes whose destinies are interwoven and influence the course of one another's lives. His landscapes and details of customs and manners stand out in bold relief. Lee Gi Yeng's prose is vigorous writing full of a subtle folk humour.

His nature descriptions do justice to the beauty of his native land:

"A blue sky, and a river that is bluer still. Steep bluffs casting heavy shadows on the smooth mirror of the water. Between the bluffs, eternally green spruce. A river front of white sand that dazzles the eyes in the sun. Willows with long green tresses reaching to their feet, lining the banks, and vociferous birds flitting about among their branches. High overhead an eagle circling in the sky. And fields, fields as far as eye can see. . . . The valley in the distance is covered with a silky green carpet, and in the middle of that carpet a mutual-aid group is at work in the rice field, weeding the crop to the accompaniment of merry song. And over the group a banner flutters. A picture grander and more colourful is difficult to imagine."

Indeed, there is no picture more inspiring than that of labour for the good of man.

I have seen for myself in Korea these industrious mutual-aid groups that till their rice fields with the precision of the jeweller, and I have seen peasants in their white national costumes at mass festivals singing songs about the newly-found joys of the new world that has opened to them. And among them, I am sure, I saw Lee Gi Yeng's heroes—as I saw them when I stood beside the author on the reviewing stand in Phyōngyang and watched the sea of open smiling faces flowing past in a grand festive procession of peasants and workers, men and women, children and young people of free Korea, the Korea we call heroic in tribute to her valiant stand on the battle fronts to protect her right to freedom and independence against imperialist invaders of recent years.

In the closing lines of his novel, Lee Gi Yeng describes Kuak Ba Wi's most cherished dream:

"The time will come when Korea, a Korea uniting both the North and the South, will have electricity everywhere. Numerous railways will cut across the length and the breadth of the land. And peasant houses, built of bricks and roofed with sturdy tiles, will have electric lights.

"The radio will be heard everywhere, and hundreds of theatres, clubs, libraries and hospitals will spring into being. Korean science, art, culture in general will flourish.

"All this will come to pass. We firmly believe that it will!"

The reader can only wish Kuak Ba Wi speedy fulfilment of his dreams, dreams shared by all the ordinary men and women of Korea.

PROFILES

ANDREI TURKOV

KONSTANTIN SIMONOV

THE WORKS of Konstantin Simonov—poet, prose-writer, and dramatist—are inspired with a lofty proletarian internationalism. Proletarian internationalism is one of the finest traditions of Soviet literature. It was to the “unknown yet his own” people, the Chinese coolies rebelling against foreign domination, that Mayakovsky dedicated some of his most impassioned lines; Mikhail Svetlov wrote of the dreamy Ukrainian lad who left his native village and went to war that the peasants of distant Grenada might have land; one of Nikolai Tikhonov’s best ballads tells of the Indian boy Sami who refused to submit to his English master. And it was this tradition that Simonov inherited and expressed almost as soon as he began writing poetry.

But this sense of kinship with the people of other lands is not just a matter of literary tradition. Simonov grew up at a time when the capitalist powers were forging plot after plot against the young Soviet state, and when the workers of those countries more than once proved, in deeds and even in blood, their friendly feelings towards the Soviet land, and their determination to help her in any misfortunes. Profound gratitude and a reciprocal desire to share and lighten the burdens placed upon our distant friends inspired many of Simonov’s poems.

The young writer grew up in the family of a Red Army officer; he lived among soldiers and officers. He was surrounded by people who were preparing to meet enemy attack; people who with anxiety and pride followed such events as the northern campaign of the Chinese revolutionary army or the march of the column led by Louis Prestes, national hero of Brazil.

Simonov was barely twenty when the world witnessed the heroic struggle of the Spanish republicans. It is hard to overestimate the part played by this event in the young writer’s artistic development.

Nearly ten years later, in his play *Under the Chestnuts of Prague* we find the following conversation:

“Remember Spain?”

“Yes.”

“So do I. That was where I fired my first bullet at the fascists.”

“Same here.”

“That’s something you don’t forget, isn’t it? Like youth.”

And again a little later:

"Whatever you say, they beat us then. The dust of anti-fascists from all over the world lies in the earth of Spain and cries out for vengeance."

The tragic fate that had overtaken the Spanish republic was a warning against complacency and underestimation of the enemy; it called for valour and vigilance. Working people all over the world strove to help their Spanish brothers. The fame of the international brigades is immortal. To one of the heroes of those brigades, the Hungarian writer Mate Zalka, better known in Spain as General Lukacs, Simonov dedicated a poem written in 1937, "The General."

In that poem Simonov created a romantic image of a Communist who fought and died for the freedom of "unknown yet his own" people. Four years later, not long before the Great Patriotic War, when the fascists were torturing their Spanish victims, when Warsaw was a heap of smoking ruins and Prague was groaning under the fascist jackboot, Soviet audiences heard the calm confident words of the young Sergei Lukonin in Simonov's play *A Fellow From Our Town*.

"It may be a good many years from now; but one day, many thousands of kilometres from here, in the city . . . well, the last fascist city . . . the last fascist will put up his hands in front of a tank on which there will be a red banner. Yes, it's going to be a red banner."

Simonov's optimistic outlook on history, on the eve of the hardest trial that had ever befallen the Soviet people, was nourished by faith in the strength of his people, in the strength of the world liberation movement.

As early as 1939, Simonov wrote two historical poems—*The Battle on the Ice*, about Alexandr Nevsky's victory over the Teutonic Knights, and *Suvorov*, about the great Russian General of that name.

The concluding lines of *The Battle on the Ice* sounded as a stern warning to the fascist invaders.

In 1939, during the fighting against the Japanese aggressors in the area of the Khalkhin Gol, Simonov worked in the battle area on the newspaper *Geroicheskaya Krasnoarmeiskaya* (Heroic Red Army). His impressions of those events formed the basis of two volumes of poetry, *Poems of 1939* and *Far Away East*.

Even then one could see quite clearly the characteristic features of Simonov's favourite type of hero—the calm, quiet-spoken man, reluctant to display his feelings but with a dash of romanticism in him, and ready at any moment to volunteer for any difficult or dangerous task that his country might require of him.

And as though imitating his hero, Simonov, as a poet, has acquired the same restrained, slightly ironical tone of a man who has seen much of life, and who is not in the least worried about his speech being fluent and smooth, let alone flowery.

All through the Great Patriotic War Simonov was a war correspondent for the newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star). Those years saw the full flowering of his literary talent and his truly amazing capacity for work.

The front-line roads, days and nights spent in the trenches, remarkable heroism and the modest, inconspicuous labour of the "rough workers" of war—sappers, supply troops, railwaymen—all that was given expression in Simonov's articles and dispatches; and in those years he became one of the best Soviet journalists. Later, those articles and his war-time stories were brought together in four books, bearing the general title of *From Black Sea to Barents Sea*.

In the fateful days of the summer of 1942, when the fascists were battering their way towards Stalingrad, *Pravda* published Simonov's play *Russian People*, which tells of the Soviet patriots who displayed unparalleled heroism in those early and especially difficult days of the war.

Many of Simonov's lyrical poems were also published in the press. The poem "Wait for Me" became immensely popular. It reminded the fighting men of home, where their loved ones were waiting and hoping for their return on the day of victory; it inspired their hearts with faith in the strength and beauty of that genuine love which no misfortune can shake.

Moving from front to front, from army to army, Simonov saw nearly all the major battles of the war. But he was particularly impressed by the great battle of Stalingrad.

"In memory of those who died for Stalingrad," was the dedication Simonov gave his novel *Days and Nights*. The defenders of the Volga stronghold appear as people who have made up their minds "to fight in such a way that afterwards, for as long as possible, there will be no need to fight."

Captain Saburov, who has already been through the hard school of war, and Lieutenant Maslennikov, boyishly devoted to him, who grows up before our eyes and is killed on the eve of victory; commissar Vanin, the young nurse Klimenko, the veteran soldier Konyukov, and many other fine characters in the book, make up "that stubborn force, whose name was 'Stalingraders'; incidentally, the full heroic meaning of that title was understood by the country and the world at large long before the men themselves, in Stalingrad, understood it."

In the final years of war and after victory, Simonov travelled in many countries—Britain, France, the United States, Japan, Italy, Germany, China and elsewhere.

Since then he has thrown himself into the struggle against the fresh intrigues of international reaction, which is trying to restore its shaken positions, against the warmongers, who veil their evil intentions with a smoke-screen of slander against the Soviet Union.

The Russian Question, one of Simonov's post-war plays, shows up the rotten morals of the American reactionary press, which is prepared to smear anyone if it is paid well enough. "He'd cross the Sahara on foot if he got wind of dollars on the other side," is the description someone in the play gives of an American publisher. But even here reaction cannot stifle the voice of truth. The story of the painful awakening of the honest journalist who finally comes to see through things is a story proving that in the end all the honest, straight-thinking people in the capitalist countries must inevitably come over into the camp of peace.

Simonov's collection of verse *Friends and Foes* is a milestone in his development as a poet. Its opening poem, "Meeting in Canada," tells how the fascist louts who filled the three front rows at a meeting in order to hiss the Soviet delegates, were afraid to do so, because the rest of the hall gave their guests such a friendly reception.

*There still remains to add, I find,
A word or two: whenever those
Who war incite, their plans disclose,
That hall is what I keep in mind,
The hall!*

And not the three front rows.

This conclusion of the poem symbolizes the triumph of the hundreds of millions of peace supporters over the clique of warmongers; it symbolizes the solidarity of common people all over the world, in their fight for happiness.

Every poem in the book is like a friendly hand stretched out to those for whom even "a sketch of the Lenin Mausoleum means police arrest," and where soldiers who talk to a Russian can be sure of extra fatigues.

The reader meets the German anti-Nazi singer whose song was chilled by "many a prison cell"; the Japanese Communist who year after year replies to the demand to renounce his Communist views with a "hieroglyphic 'No!' calm and intrepid"; the lad from Java who died under torture without flinching, "died as Communists should die." Again we bow our heads in the sacred memory of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the poet's words ring out grimly.

*We, Communists, never forget the enacted—
Let deathmongers quake with fear and dismay—
The passage of time will have nothing detracted
From crime's heavy burden—the killers will pay!
We're still in good health and of vigorous build,
What we won't accomplish—our children will.
They go to school—*

there's no forgetting—

*Down Kirov Street,
down Voykov Street,
and down the
Sacco-Vanzetti.*

The last lines are significant. The names of Sacco and Vanzetti placed side by side with the names of the poet's heroic fellow countrymen symbolize the profound solidarity that exists between Soviet people and their friends in other lands, the respect for the revolutionary traditions of all peoples which Soviet people feel, and which they foster in their children.

In *Friends and Foes* Simonov is clearly making an effort to use creatively the legacy of Mayakovsky, who was the first Soviet poet to dwell freely and broadly on international themes in his poetry. Having undertaken important political tasks in his poetry, Simonov rightly felt he should turn to Mayakovsky for inspiration.

Since the war, besides a large number of articles, poems and pamphlets, Simonov has written three plays, *Under the Chestnuts of Prague*, *Alien Shadow*, and *Good Name*, as well as a book of travel impressions entitled *The Fighting China*.

His latest novel, *Comrades-in-Arms*, the first book of a large-scale work, is of particular interest.

In contrast to Simonov's earlier prose works (the war stories and *Days and Nights*) one feels in this new novel a desire on the part of the author to take in much more of life. Many episodes in the book remind one of the verses and poems Simonov wrote soon after the events in Mongolia; but here his thought is far more mature and profound.

From the very first page, with its description of a fiery sunset over the steppes of Mongolia, the reader feels an ominous atmosphere of tension. The time was approaching when the Soviet Army was to show its

mettle not in bloodless battles between "Reds" and "Blues" at manoeuvres, but on the sands of the Khalkhin Gol in Mongolia. And when those battles ended in victory, there were few who allowed themselves to hope that the lull would be for long.

"What's happening here is just the prelude! . . ." says one of the characters in the book thoughtfully. Those words contain what one might call the "key" to the novel.

It is all just the prelude! The first notes of that terrible theme of invasion which ring out with such devastating effect in Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony. The first solemn bars of a funeral march. The first sobs of parting that vibrate in the voice. The first pounding beats of a heart filled with hatred of the enemy, the hatred from which victory is forged.

We still do not know where we shall re-encounter the heroes of *Comrades-in-Arms*, whose stern courage has such a romantic aura about it; perhaps we shall see them in the thin line of frontier guards checking the fierce onslaught of the enemy on that June morning of 1941, or standing to the last man before Moscow, or forcing their way out of besieged Odessa.

In any case one hopes that what Simonov calls the "rare and treasured premonition of awakening friendship" will not disappoint the reader who has made friends with a very good book.

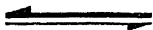
Simonov often writes articles on literary subjects and reviews works the evaluation of which he thinks essential to an understanding of the tasks confronting Soviet writers.

An unbiassed and friendly manner of criticism, a readiness to support young and inexperienced talent, a consistent appeal for richness and variety in Soviet literature, are, perhaps, the features that distinguish Simonov as a literary critic.

From 1950 to 1953 Simonov was the editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. At present he is the editor of the magazine *Novy Mir* (New World), and one of the secretaries of the Union of Soviet Writers.

Simonov's public activities cover a wide field. In 1946 and 1950 he was elected a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., and in 1952, at the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a candidate for membership of the Central Committee of the Party. He is also a member of the Soviet Peace Committee.

Konstantin Simonov is at the height of his talent, and we have every reason to feel confident of seeing him achieve further notable success in his work.



RECENT RUSSIAN PUBLICATIONS OF FOREIGN WORKS



SELECTED WORKS OF ELIZA ORZESZKOWA

THE WORKS of Eliza Orzeszkowa (1842-1910) are well-known to the Russian reader, having been published in Russia time and again. It would be hard to name a single novel or story by the famous Polish author, even the shortest, that has not been translated into Russian. Imbued with sincere compassion for all the "humiliated and injured" and pervaded with deep-felt sorrow over the bitter lot of the oppressed Polish toiler, Orzeszkowa's works found their way to the hearts of progressive Russian readers long before the Revolution.

This is eloquently testified to by the fact that four editions of Orzeszkowa's complete works were brought out in Russia previous to 1917, while some of her stories were published separately over and over again; *Juli-anka*, for instance, was published more than 10 times, *Dziurdziowie* 13 times, *A Winter Evening* 10 times. Many of Orzeszkowa's stories appeared in progressive Russian magazines. *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, which was edited by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, printed *Sylphida*, *My Lord*, *Powerful Samson* and other stories. *The Argonauts*, a novel, appeared in Russian in the magazine *Vestnik Yevrope* simultaneously with its publication in Poland (1899). In a leading article congratulating the Polish writer on the 30th anniversary of her literary activities the magazine *Russkaya Mysl* wrote:

"... we greet you warmly and wish you many long years of work for the good of your country's literature."

In the U.S.S.R., Orzeszkowa's works are published in mass editions. They are very popular with the reading public and of serious interest to literary scholars. In recent years alone the State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry put out a two-volume edition of Orzeszkowa's *Selected Works* (1948), the tale *The Lowlands*, total print 90,000 copies (1953) and a collection of short stories, total print 150,000 copies (1954).

Publication of a new five-volume edition of the *Selected Works* of Eliza Orzeszkowa by the State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry may be regarded as the outcome of extensive work on Orzeszkowa's literary productions conducted in the U.S.S.R. over a period of many years.

Arranged chronologically, the new edition contains the most characteristic and vivid of the talented writer's works, the majority of them dealing with fundamental social problems in Poland in the latter part of the 19th century.

Although a large number of old translations was available, practically all of the translations in the present edition are new, the publishers having striven to satisfy the high standard of literary translation demanded by Soviet readers.

One of the basic requirements of a translation is that it be exact, that it convey the meaning of the original faithfully. There must be no omissions, not even the slightest, and, finally, the most authoritative edition of the original should be followed. The translations in the new Russian edition were checked with one of the latest Polish editions (E. Orzeszkowa, *Pisma zebrane*, Warszawa, Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1949). The translators succeeded in the difficult task of conveying Orzeszkowa's distinctive style into a foreign language.

Orzeszkowa was stirred by the burning problems of her day, by the fate of the Polish intellectuals and landed gentry, their moral principles and ideals; but, above all, she was deeply concerned about the wretched condition of the common people. Many of her works are still of interest from a purely informative point of view, as truthful descriptions of life of diverse sections of the population in Poland in the second half of the 19th century.

All her life Orzeszkowa protested indignantly against the unequal position of women in society, and many of her novels and articles for the press deal with that subject. *Martha* (1873), a story about the tragedy of a working woman in a society where inequality, competition and unemployment rule, opens the new five-volume edition.

Volume two contains three long stories about peasant life: *The Lowlands* (1883), *Dziurdziowie* (1885) and *Cham* (1887). The writer, it should be recalled, frequently drew her subject-matter from peasant life. In the above-mentioned stories, as well as in the short stories in volume five, she is ever an angry accuser of the ruling classes and an ardent champion of the oppressed people.

There has been a crop failure. The village children are swollen from hunger; infants die in their cradles. Yet the landlord makes merry in the mansion near by, completely indifferent to the troubles of his "younger brothers," the peasants. (*The Years of Famine*, 1866.) It is a bright and sunny day, with the flowers fragrant in the landlord's luxuriant garden and the birds singing incessantly, when little Tadeusz dies because his parents,

who are farm labourers, have been unable to look after him (*Tadeusz*, 1885) Hard is the lot of the peasants described in *The Lowlands*. They live in dire poverty but they cherish dreams and affections that are dearer to them than anything on earth. A sharp businessman by the name of Kaprowski, "a peasant advocate," takes advantage of this to swindle them out of the meagre savings of a lifetime. Ignorance and illiteracy reigned in the old country-side. The power of prejudice and superstition leading people to crime is the theme of *Dziurdziowie*.

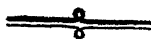
Respect for human dignity and an understanding of the rich inner world of the common man are characteristic features of Orzeszkowa's work. Loyalty to one's country and to one's people is the noble idea underlying the novel *On the Neman* (1887), to which the third volume is devoted. In this novel the impoverishment of the middling and small landlords and the birth of capitalist relations in the Polish country-side are depicted with the power of a truly realist artist. The author's famous compatriot Maria Curie-Sklodowska was very much impressed by this book. "I was deeply moved by Orzeszkowa's *On the Neman*," she wrote in a letter to her sister, January 24, 1888. "I think of it constantly. All our innermost thoughts are in it. I cried like a child when I read it."

The fourth volume is comprised of works written towards the end of the 'nineties: *An Interrupted Song* and *Bene Nati* (*Well-Born*, 1891), *The Argonauts* (1899). In them Orzeszkowa sharply criticizes contemporary society, the society of the bourgeoisie and the gentry founded on the exploitation and poverty of the masses, on oppression and hypocrisy. *The Argonauts* gives a forceful portrayal of the insatiable avarice of a rapacious capitalist. *Bene Nati* caustically ridicules the prejudices of the gentry and their contempt for people who work.

The last volume contains Eliza Orzeszkowa's best stories (*Julianka*, *A Joyless Idyll*, *Panna Antonina*, *Echo*, *Kind Pani*, and others). The writer sympathizes with abandoned and homeless children, with poverty-stricken working people and their tragic plight under conditions of social inequality and disabilities.

Thus, the new five-volume edition contains Eliza Orzeszkowa's major works and gives the reader a clear comprehensive idea of the distinguished Polish writer's lofty humanism and the general trends of her work.

NATALIA PODOLSKAYA



SELECTED WORKS OF ION LUCA CARAGIALE

ION Luca Caragiale (1852-1912) is one of Rumania's most brilliant representatives of critical realism. All his works, whatever their genre—comedy, short story, essay, humorous narrative, or *feuilleton*—contain sharp criticism of social conditions and always hit the mark, striking at the very foundations of bourgeois-landlord Rumania.

The ruling clique hated this democratic writer and persecuted him savagely. The venal press called his scathing satire "unpatriotic" and "slandereous." Members of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences, currying favour with the powers-that-be, labelled his work "immoral" and "pornographic." Hired thugs and Bratianu's "civil guards" hounded Caragiale. Theatre directors falsified his plays, turning satire into farce. Book and newspaper publishers boycotted him. The distinguished Rumanian playwright was in constant need. He took any job he could get to make some sort of a living—copying roles for actors, working as reporter, school inspector, teacher, clerk—but he was discharged every time on orders from above and left without the means for a crust of bread.

In consequence of unceasing persecution Caragiale was finally compelled to leave his country, spending the last years of his life (1904-1912) as a voluntary exile abroad. "There is nothing for me to aspire to in a country where sponging and stealing are regarded as virtues, while work and talent are despised sins," he wrote not long before he died.

After Caragiale's death Rumanian bourgeois literary scholars did their best to distort the nature of his work. Some depicted this "enemy of the upper ten thousand" (as he called himself) as a mediocre and harmless wit who made fun of the weaknesses of the "man in the street." Others strove to narrow the significance of his biting satire. Caragiale, they said, "wrote popular humorous stories and satirical comedies that exposed with caustic irony the inadequate culture of the lower classes."

Caragiale himself, however, definitely stated the objective of his humour and satire. "It is not, dear readers, from a desire to laugh myself, or to make others laugh, that this newspaper has been founded," he wrote in *Moftul Roman (Rumanian Nonsense)*, the humorous newspaper he published in 1893. "The fundamental principle of this paper is protest." And, indeed, Caragiale's writings are full of passionate protest against the barbaric social system under which idlers, parasites, jailers and hangmen governed the country. The sting of his satire was directed against a regime based on an intricate web of capitalist and feudal methods of exploitation; it was directed against the pseudo-culture of the ruling classes.

Soviet readers and theatre-goers know and love Caragiale. His classical comedy *The Lost Letter*, which is playing to full houses in many theatres of the U.S.S.R., has already had 177 performances in this country in the course of two years (1952-53), whereas in bourgeois-landlord Rumania

it had 129 performances in 65 years. Numerous collections of Caragiale's works and separate editions of his comedies, stories and articles have appeared in Russian.

The State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry recently brought out a one-volume edition of Caragiale's *Selected Works* (90,000 copies). This book gives the reader an idea of the diversity of artistic means the writer used in fighting the Rumanian oligarchy. All of Caragiale's work is pervaded with the lofty humanism so clearly expressed in a letter he once wrote to the progressive writer Vlahuta. "I believe that it is the writer's duty to brighten and alleviate the present and to inspire men with at least a spark of hope in the future. . . . Someone said that indignation creates poetry. Prose, too, I say. . . . I remain, as you know, a determined adherent of partisanship in art."

The one-volume edition contains three of Caragiale's best comedies. In them the contrast between the vile deeds and fine words of Rumanian bourgeois politicians is brought out in sharp relief. The lying, hypocritical speeches made by the Liberal candidate Catavencu, a scoundrel of the purest water (*The Lost Letter*), by the bourgeois-nationalist demagogue Rica Venturiano (*Stormy Night*), and by the old pensioner Leonida (*Coana Leonida in Face of Reaction*), with their talk of the "sovereign people," liberty, the constitution, honesty, morals, the family and the fatherland, reveal a shocking picture of the utter depravity and corruption of bourgeois society in Rumania.

Caragiale wrote his most important dramatic works between 1879 and 1884 and they were, naturally, limited by the specific features of that historical period. Rumanian capitalism was still in its "childhood"; foreign monopoly capital had not yet gained control of the country's wealth, chiefly its oil. Rumania's servile role in the fatal diplomatic game of the imperialist great powers was not yet clearly defined. As a result, the characters in Caragiale's comedies frequently conceal their true colours under a patriarchal mask. As a discerning artist, however, Caragiale always saw his characters in movement, and it is no accident that twenty years later, not long before his death, he began to write a play in which the characters were no longer small landowners, merchants, government officials, demagogic politicians and bombastic journalists but landlords, oil magnates, members of the government, senators and newspaper publishers in the hire of international monopoly capital. Unfortunately, the play was never finished.

Most of the stories and articles included in the new edition energetically denounce social evils and in many respects bear witness to the author's political foresight. *True Rumanians*, *Specimen of Rumanian Manhood*, *Specimen of Rumanian Womanhood* and other stories castigate the man-hating views of the predecessors of the fascist *Iron Guard* and their brutal chauvinism. In an article entitled *Dreams of War* Caragiale shows that in reality political adventurers with a reputation for liberal views want war, that the capitalists strive for war so that their profits may increase while men of the people die. "And you wonder that the raven rejoices when he smells carrion and that the real Liberal dreams of war!" the article concludes.

The morals of the reactionary press are sharply ridiculed in a short story called *A Printer's Luck*. A printer, exhausted by hard labour and hopeless poverty, complains to a pilgrim who turns out to be the Virgin Mary. As a result of the Virgin's appeal to her divine Son the printer begins



L. Caragiale's play *The Lost Letter* (illustration by E. Burgunker).

to receive a remuneration of three pennies for every slanderous statement he has to set up, two pennies for every lie and one penny for every two pieces of nonsense. Before long he is a rich man.

Caragiale was not a revolutionary Marxist in the full sense of the word but he frequently expressed his sympathy with the aims of the revolutionary labour movement. In a well-known article entitled *May Day* (1893), also included in the present collection, he emphasized that his satire had the same aim as the organized workers, i.e., the destruction of the existing unjust regime. Caragiale saw clearly what the treacherous Rumanian Social-Democratic leaders refused to see, i.e., the steadily growing alliance between the revolutionary workers and peasants.

In a letter to a friend written in 1907, during the famous peasant rebellion in Rumania, he said: "One must never forget that twelve Socialist railwaymen were arrested in Pascani for disturbing the peace. They were accused of having helped the insurgents and of having taken down the portraits of the royal family in their meeting hall and hung up pictures of Marx, Engels, Lassalle and others in their stead. The arrested men were tortured. . . ."

Caragiale's enemies, who considered his popularity a direct threat to their interests, consoled themselves with the thought that his works, especially the comedies, were "untranslatable." This has been proved reactionary slander. The Russian translation of the plays in the present edition has succeeded in conveying the style of the original, which is indeed difficult due to the use of a large number of provincialisms and local slang expressions current among broad sections of the urban population in Rumania in the latter part of the 19th century.

All his life Caragiale dreamed of a time when the people would rule in Rumania, the only ruler whom he wished to serve. His dream has come true. The working people are in power in People's Democratic Rumania and Caragiale's writings serve them as he would have wished, for they are contributing to the eradication of all the evil that hinders progress and are helping in the construction of a new world.



S. MOROZOV

FARTHEST NORTH

I. Masters of the Polar Ice

THE AIR journey to the Arctic is accompanied by astonishingly swift changes of scene that make a mockery of the calendar. As we leave Moscow Airport on a fine March morning there are pools of water on the run-way under the fuselage of the aircraft. At noon we are flying over the snow-carpeted surface of the Northern Dvina, touched here and there with blue where the thaw has formed the first patches of water; the derricks on the still deserted wharves at Arkhangelsk stand in frozen immobility. Towards evening the windows of the warm cabin are covered with frost-patterns as white as the tundra which can just be seen through them.

On the navigator's map the line of our north-easterly flight cuts deeper and deeper into the network of parallels and meridians as the broad-winged golden-hued Ilyushin passenger plane leaves behind it hundreds of kilometres of space and many time belts. After the tundra of the mainland comes a sea of floating ice. From our view-point on the "ceiling," the ice-floes, alternating with blotches of clear water, look like pieces of mosaic in a gigantic floor. The view serves to remind us that the Kara Sea, which is cut off from the warm waters of the Gulf Stream by the rock barrier of Novaya Zemlya, was known of old as the "Ice Cellar."

In our days, when by the volition of the Communist Party and the Soviet people the Northern Passage is being permanently and firmly mastered, the Kara Sea lies at the beginning of the important shipping route that connects the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans and runs along the entire northern coast of Asia.

It was here, too, on Dickson Island, that in the spring of 1954 the air routes to the Central Arctic intersected. In three groups, Soviet air-

men and scientists set out for the Far North to fill in the few remaining white gaps on the map of the Arctic Ocean.

In the vicinity of the North Pole, where, deep below the ocean surface, stretches the Lomonosov mountain range, flew a group of airmen led by Ivan Cherevichny, accompanied by a party of scientific workers headed by the magnetologist Mikhail Ostrekin. The two leaders of this expedition were pioneers in arctic research and, with their colleagues, were continuing work which had been begun on the eve of the Second World War and considerably expanded in the post-war years. A great many air hops were made off the drifting ice near the North Pole and studies made of the depth and currents of the ocean and of atmospheric and magnetic phenomena.

Other groups, headed by Mikhail Titlov and Ilya Kotov respectively, were sent to Chukotka and Cape Chelyuskin—taking-off points for the drifting ice in the Far North, on which floating scientific stations were to be established.

In those early days, a large goods depot and a transfer base were in operation on the ice of Dickson Bay. Here and there stood stacks of tents, stoves and cylinders of gas, cases of sundry equipment, all bearing the mark SP-3 or SP-4.¹ At any time of the day or night one could meet here Alexei Tryoshnikov and the meteorologist Yevgeni Tolstikov, who were to be in charge of the scientific stations North Pole 3 and North Pole 4 respectively. Accompanied by their future companions on the ice-floes, they carefully sorted the goods and saw them safely on to the planes. Veterans of the Arctic with many expeditions behind them, they made all the necessary preparations for scientific work on the ocean ice.

The commanders on the aircraft—the wheels having been replaced by skis—made trial flights to “get the feel” of the planes; the mechanics subjected the machines to tests in the air and on the surface of the bay, which was still ice-bound. Little time remained before the day when their skis would glide over the pack ice in the middle of the Arctic Ocean.

Strictly on time, the aircraft of the leader of the expedition, V. F. Burkhanov, who is the head of the Main Northern Sea Route, and the air group of Mikhail Titlov, which was taking Tolstikov's party, flew eastward to Chukotka. They were followed a few days later by Ilya Kotov's detachment with the Tryoshnikov party, to which we belonged.

Below, we can see floating ice and unfrozen patches from which vapour rises in hazy clouds. Through the frosty mist we catch sight of an occasional arctic station on the deserted coast of Western Taimyr. Cape Chelyuskin juts out to meet us, lit by the unsetting sun of the long arctic day.

But Kotov does not linger here. He and Pyotr Moskalenko pilot two advance planes farther north, to beyond the 85th parallel. Before long, from a recently established camp on an ice-floe, comes the first wireless message: “Excellent ice-floe found, we are clearing an air-strip.” On the following day other aircraft landed there, bringing fuel for a farther hop into a still more northerly region.

We flew to Kotov's camp in the plane that had brought us from Moscow, captained by Fyodor Shatrov. The heavily-loaded IL ran for a long time over the tundra of Cape Chelyuskin before it became airborne, but it

¹ North Pole is in Russian Severni Polyus—hence the marks SP-3 and SP-4.

took off as smoothly and gained height as quickly as it had done a few days before when we left Moscow. Now, however, we looked down not on suburban groves in fields of thinning snow but on the Vilkitsky Straits whose surface was densely covered with ridges of ice. Then fog swallowed up the straits and we saw only the glaciers of Severnaya Zemlya.

Survivals of the Ice Age, these glaciers which witnessed the youth of our planet, conceal a good half of an archipelago that is considerably larger than Belgium or Holland. They are millions of years old, yet Severnaya Zemlya appeared on the map only in the 20th century.

True, the famous 19th-century geographer and revolutionary P. A. Kropotkin, in forecasting the existence of Franz Josef Land, wrote also about "an Archipelago which ought to lie to the east of Novaya Zemlya." A year before the outbreak of the First World War, an arctic hydrographical expedition discovered the eastern shore of this archipelago and hoisted the Russian flag there. But not until Soviet times was this new territory brought truly within the frontiers. Charted for the first time by G. A. Ushakov in 1930-1932 the Severnaya Zemlya islands were given the proud names October Revolution, Bolshevik, Komsomolets, and Young Pioneer islands.

Today, as we fly over the ice-capped domes of Bolshevik Island, our thoughts turn with gratitude towards the first Bolsheviks of the Arctic. What a tremendous effort it must have cost them to make the sledge journeys across this virgin land through blizzards and the murk of the polar night. And how far our geographers have advanced in their scientific ideas during the past twenty years, how greatly the technical means for studying the Arctic have developed. From geodetic surveying of the surface of the Earth we have advanced to a thorough investigation of the depth of the ocean. From dog sledges to powerful aircraft.

But we leave Severnaya Zemlya to the south. Now we are crossing open sea leaving behind shallow coastal waters. The motionless fringe of coastal ice looks from above like some stiffly starched table-cloth that has been crumpled and torn by a giant's hand. Beyond the shallow Laptev Sea, whose waters mingle with those of the great Siberian rivers, begin the ocean depths. The titanic forces of the Arctic Ocean, with its many layers of cold and warm waters, are ever moving between the North Pole and the Equator. In constant agitation and bustle, the fields of old arctic pack ice pile up cumbrously. Jamming and jostling each other, they pile up here and there into ice-ridges streaked with fantastic cracks. Through the haze of vapour the fathomless "windows" in the ice gape like black abysses.

No ship ever sailed so far to the north as this. But Soviet aircraft have established a regular staging-post and a transit camp on the ice here.

The radio-compass needle dances, then stops over the point of our course. Our navigator Fyodor Burlutsky puts on his ear-phones and listens intently to the increasingly loud signal. It is his old friend Nikolai Bogatkin, the wireless operator in Kotov's crew, tapping out a message from his station on the ice somewhere down below. Shatrov, the commander of our plane, brings it in according to the wireless directions and in a few moments receives Kotov's radio-telephone message to land.

On the white snow we see two dark mounds—the dome-shaped tents—and the markers of the air-strip. The red covers over the wings of Kotov's and Moskalenko's planes glow brightly in the beams of the sinking sun. A third plane—an IL—is taxiing to the starting-point; in a few moments it takes off, heading southward. N. V. Mironenko, its pilot, has mastered



Aerologists release probing balloon.

the new air route straight from Dickson to the floating camp, and now he is making his second flight on it, going off to bring back the next cargo of fuel and stores.

Shatrov and Burlutsky—the one tall, the other quite short—are warmly welcomed by Kotov as they climb down on to the ice.

“Well, Big Fedya and Little Fedya, take over from me. Alexei, Fyodorovich and I are going on a bit farther,” says Kotov.

“Aye, it’s about time I got myself a permanent address,” says the tall Tryoshnikov who looks more than usually massive in his warm arctic suit. “It’s high time, high time, Ilya Spiridonovich. Over there to the east Titlov and Maslennikov have already landed Tolstikov’s party.”

It makes no difference that Titlov’s group is separated from us by thousands of kilometres. Every day we get wireless messages from them, and we are delighted to hear of the first successful landing on the ice done by Titlov and Maslennikov.

We fly farther to the north-east with Tryoshnikov and Kotov, looking for a suitable ice-floe where the drifting station North Pole 3 can be established.

At this stage Tryoshnikov, who was to be in charge of this station, took with him only one of his party, the cameraman Yevgeni Yatsun. This indefatigable chronicler of arctic expeditions spent several months in 1950 on the drifting station North Pole 2, taking advantage of the summer light to photograph. Now Yatsun has more ambitious plans: he intends to go on shooting all the year round far within the Arctic Circle—not only in summer but in winter, too, when there is no daylight.

Yatsun takes his first shots the moment that Kotov's plane rises from the ice and settles on its course. There is little room to move in the spacious cabin. Tents and stoves and gas cylinders, cases of provisions, shovels, crow-bars and ice-picks for clearing away the ice are piled up, blocking most of the windows. But even in this faint light Yatsun manages to take his shots. Switching in to the plane's storage battery, he trails a length of cable behind him, and holds a blinding lamp in his hands.

"Hold the lamp, please."

Down below, the ice is not yet good enough for us. As far as the eye can see it stretches in an even white field, darkened by the sharp edges of the ice-ridges and spotted by patches of water. The whole expanse is streaked with arabesque patterns that run to the horizon, resembling white rivers between dark banks.

"No, that ice won't do."

An experienced arctic traveller can tell at a glance the age and firmness of the ice on the sea. The ice-field over which we have been flying for over three hours is suitable enough for a landing. But how will this young ice behave under further pressure during the next cold spell? Firm, reliable foundations have to be found for the future research station which will have to drift across the entire central portion of the Arctic Ocean in a year. What we need is a large piece of old, tough pack that has weathered the wind and the frosts, known many winters and survived many collisions.

We continue our search patiently. Mikhail Sherpakov got up many a time to stand under the glass-topped observation post and take a sextant bearing of the sun. He would pick up a slide-rule, jot down a few figures and compare them with the reports sent out by the wireless station on the coast and picked up by the wireless-operator. We are about 400 kilometres from the North Pole, close to the 180th meridian which divides the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. This was the place that had been chosen for the drifting station.

Taking turns at the controls, Kotov and Pimenov fly us along a low-altitude, zig-zag course carefully examining the ice below the wings.

"There we are," exclaims Tryoshnikov suddenly.

"H'm, I wonder, Alexei Fyodorovich," says Kotov uncertainly as he screws up his eyes. "It'll suit you to live on, of course, but how we're going to land there is another matter."

The white surface below us looks like frozen waves. The cake of pack ice has an elongated shape; it has apparently been drifting for several years and stands up well to the pressure of the young ice-floes around it. Summer thaws and winter gales have considerably smoothed its knobby surface. The white ice-ridges have been worn down to those rounded protrusions known in arctic vocabulary as "foreheads." Yes, there is no doubt

about it. To land a heavily-loaded twin-engined plane here would be but to court disaster.

Kotov and Tryoshnikov decide to keep up the search. But we had found nothing better after over five hours' flying.

"Well, Ilya Spiridonovich, it looks as if we'll have to return to that floe after all," insists Tryoshnikov. "It's a capital ice-field, a tip-top place. We'll find no better."

"All right," Kotov agrees after a moment's reflection. "Let's return then. We'll have to look for some place near by to land on, though. As for the cargo, well, I'm afraid it'll have to do the last stage of the journey overland. Never mind, it'll be like taking it from the station to the town."

Laughingly the two friends decided that the cost of one more transfer—this time from one ice-floe to another—will not make much difference to the total expense of effort involved in transporting the expedition. It does not take Kotov long to find a flat ice-floe suitable for a landing, some nine kilometres from the large floe.

No matter how used you are to making an air-landing on floating ice it is an operation that always rouses a feeling of anticipatory alarm. How will the brittle ice skin behave when the heavy skis rest on it? It looks solid enough from above but, maybe, it isn't really, and the heavy steel plane is going to be swallowed up in the depths of the ocean the moment it grounds. No pair of binoculars will show you the cracks hidden under the snow, the sharp ridges and frozen drifts whose outlines are concealed by dazzling sunshine.

But years of experience seem to have equipped the eyes of the arctic flyer with some special, super-sensitive keenness. After a careful observation of the ice-floe, Kotov brings the plane down, and now the ice-ridges have become toweringly high and their sharp glistening blue edges are streaking below us. Banking into the wind, Kotov comes in to land; a sharp buzz from the pilot's cabin warns us to hold on tight and not to move.

Bump . . . bump . . . bump. The skis are now sliding more slowly, and the unknown ice-field that we had only just been gazing down on so anxiously has become our haven, our home. We open the door, let down the ladder and drop on to the ice to crowd round the steel boring instrument used for testing the thickness of the ice.

"The thickness is all right," exults Tryoshnikov as he withdraws the drill and shows us how it drips sea-water. Beaming all over his face, he flings his arms round Kotov.

"Thank you, thank you, old man. Ice this thick will stand the weight of any plane."

"Standing the weight is one thing," Kotov says grudgingly. "But we'll have to flatten the ice a bit, otherwise we'll have our IL turning a sommersault."

Kotov is himself the first to bring a heavy ice-pick out of the plane. We follow his example and for the next two or three hours all of us are conscientiously engaged in doing a job with which every Russian street-cleaner is familiar every winter. Working from one end of the floe to the other, we plant little markers along the air-strip, breaking any unevennesses in the ice and smoothing down the drifts and projecting ridges.

Are we tired? Not exactly. The word is not applicable. We are soaked with sweat in our incredibly heavy, wadded suits and fur-lined boots. Our

dark glasses are constantly blurring with frozen vapour, for there are over 30 degrees of frost. The ice-picks and the spades grow heavier each time we lift them, but there are still many bumps and hillocks and hollows to be smoothed. Kotov and Tryoshnikov wield their crow-bars evenly and keep advancing with an occasional glance back. With the critical eyes of overseers they survey every square metre of surface we have cleared. These two, airman and man of science—Hero of the Soviet Union and Hero of Socialist Labour respectively—have obviously had much experience of this simple but very arduous and important work.

We seem to have finished. . . . Trailing behind us our shovels, our ice-picks and our crow-bars, we struggle to the plane over which the cardboard kite of the portable aerial is dancing in the wind.

Bogatkin, the wireless-operator, has "gone on to the air"—he has established contact with the mainland and with other floating camps.

But rest is still a long time ahead: there is the tent to be put up, the gas-stove with its cylinder to be fixed, snow to be prepared for melting, so that we have water for washing and for our tea and dinner. We are settling in as best we can when Valentin Ananiev, the mechanic comes in. He looks excited when he reaches the tent.

"I've found a fox trail," he announces categorically.

We do not believe him at first. But Ananiev swears he is telling the truth and gives us no peace until we all go along after him. And, true enough, there near the ice-ridges we see the print of paws, unmistakably different from any marks left by our boots or the tracks of the plane's skis.

"It's an arctic fox, there's no doubt about that," says Kotov. "And where there's an arctic fox there's always a polar bear, that we all know. So, my friends, we'll have to keep an eye open."

And thereupon he draws up a list of sentries and carries out a personal inspection to see that our rifles are loaded.

But apparently the bears who roamed those parts had their own worries in life, for we lived undisturbed for three days and three nights and never a shot was fired. It may be that the original owners of the drifting ice-floes were feeling a bit put out by the shindy that the new inhabitants brought with them: from time to time the wireless station would be chirruping, the aeroplane engines roaring.

It would be wrong to pretend that we were not extremely nervous when Mironenko's plane came in to land with the fuel. But Mironenko touched down beautifully, and, taxiing his plane up to the camp, came out of the cabin with a happy smile all over his face. While we rolled barrels out of the IL down steeply inclined planks, our visitors from the mainland drank tea in our tent. After a snack and a short rest they thanked us for our hospitality and flew away.

As we saw Mironenko off, we said jokingly: "Well, the station is beginning to work all right, but we haven't got the town built yet."

"We shall get to town by taxi," said Tryoshnikov when, the next day, a single-engined AN-2 arrived.

Our collective farmers and country doctors know these planes well. They are often to be seen over the fields and orchards and in roadless districts where they serve to bring medical aid. Mikhail Stupishin brought his AN-2 confidently across 1,500 kilometres of floating ice.

"What a beauty. It's like a dragon-fly," said Kotov admiringly of the light biplane which had come to a halt in less than 50 metres from the

point where it touched down on the ice. "A dragon-fly that will take you anywhere."

Our "taxi" took us in a few minutes over the nine kilometres of ice-ridges and stretches of sea between our "station" and the future "town." But as it landed on the wavy surface of the pack, it bounced and jarred like a light trap on a rutty road. Again Tryoshnikov and Kotov bored holes in the ice; then they measured the length and breadth of the ice-floe. The many-year-old cake of pack ice which had already been carefully surveyed from the air was now examined almost by touch. And again the airman and the man of science were satisfied with their choice.



Chief of Station SP-3, A. Tryoshnikov.

"So we can build here, chief?" Kotov asked on the way back as the two men sat in the cabin of the "taxi."

"I'm sure we can," said Tryoshnikov. "You'll not find a better ice-floe round here. We'll show it to Burkhanov, and, if he agrees with our selection, we'll lay the town's foundation stone."

Meanwhile, Burkhanov was waiting for the return of Kotov and Tryoshnikov at the "station" on the ice-floe. The leader of the expedition's IL had just alighted at our camp.

II. Capital of the Far North

In our little camp on the ice we feel somewhat cut off from the world. It is about 1,500 kilometres to the nearest coast. The ether is full of constant crackling, and when our radio-operator does succeed in picking-up a station, the mainland speaks to us in hoarse, distorted voices.

But the chief's plane lands on the ice-floe, and our remote fastness takes on a completely new look. We listen eagerly to all that the newcomers have to tell us, and we feel really comfortable on the soft sofas in the spacious cabin of the plane, drawn up to a broad table covered with maps, telegrams and weather reports.

"So things are going all right for Tolstikov over there in the east, eh, Vasil'i Fedotovich?" asks Tryoshnikov as he settles into an arm-chair next to Burkhanov.

"Excellent, Alexei Fyodorovich," Burkhanov replies with a smile. "Tolstikov asked to be remembered to you. But he's not east of you here. he's south."

The chief of the expedition lays the tip of his pencil on a circle on the map, beside which are written the letters SP and the figure 4.

Tolstikov's floating research station which took to the ice off the coast of Chukotka, is now about a thousand kilometres south of us, almost on the same meridian.

"I mean south of course," agrees Tryoshnikov with a laugh. "One forgets one's geography as far north as this."

Meanwhile the commander of the IL, I. P. Mazuruk, is engaged in conversation with Kotov. The two men are poring over a navigational map. A thick black line that runs close to the North Pole links our camp with the one where Cherevichny has established himself. His party has already flown on to the neighbourhood of the Pole and has started surveying the submarine mountains known as the Lomonosov Range.

"Two hours will be enough to reach the place, or, say, two and a half at the outside," Mazuruk says with assurance.

Kotov nods.

"I envy you airmen," laughs Burkhanov. "If only we sailors could set our course like that—straight ahead."

The head of the Northern Sea Route plunges into a reverie as he recalls the long difficult months of the annual arctic voyages. The cargo vessels creep in the wake of the ice-breakers. The captains choose their course with care, every now and then consulting the weather experts or the air reconnaissance people about their proposed route. Sometimes the wind changes, and in less than an hour the clear fairway is blocked with a dense ice-field. And for all their mighty boilers and turbines and diesel engines the steel ships are helpless against this elemental force.



Breakfasting. In the middle is Chief of Station SP-4, Y. Tolstikov.

Not a simple job, being in charge of the Northern Route. A job that requires a deep knowledge of the ways of the water and the ice, of the atmospheric conditions in the Arctic, without which it is impossible to plan with certainty the movements of the fleet, the construction of ports and the development of wild, uninhabited places. There are still many blank spaces on the map, as there are in our knowledge of those parts. But groups of Soviet people are working together in a mutual effort to conquer the Arctic, working in the cities and in small winter stations, at sea and on shore, in factory and in laboratory.

Among the qualities demanded of arctic explorers, patience and care are no less important than audacity and resolution. And although Burkhanov has full confidence in the experienced Tryoshnikov and Kotov, it is he who has the last word in approving the choice of ice-floe for the drifting scientific station North Pole 3. Transferring from the cumbersome IL into the flimsy AN-2, Burkhanov flies to the proposed site, inspects it and is back again within an hour.

"Well, congratulations on your new home," he says when he takes his leave of Tryoshnikov. "I approve. Go ahead with the building."

"Our settlement is going to be the capital of the Far North," says Tryoshnikov, smiling. "After all, it's in the middle."

To start with, the floating "capital of the Far North" cannot boast of a plethora either of buildings or inhabitants. When Burkhanov's IL leaves, followed by Kotov's plane in which Tryoshnikov flies to bring back people and stores from the mainland, I am left alone with Yatsun, the cameraman, to occupy the only tent that had been put up on the ice-floe. The rest of us—the crew of the AN-2—cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered as permanent inhabitants. The "air taxi" leaves us too often for that on its regular trips between the "station" and the future "town." Every thirty or forty minutes we are meeting the plane and unloading cases and sacks from its small cabin. In the intervals we cook a meal.

The meat dumplings and beef steaks sent to us from Moscow reach the Far North in excellent condition. Fish is a trickier business. Sterlet from the Yenisei come frozen solid and we set about chopping it like wood and thumping it against the crates and only then thawing it out in melted-snow water.

At long last we have the fish dressed and cut up. The thick, well-salted fish broth is simmering on the gas-stove when we remember about the onions and laurel leaf—something we do not have handy, for they are kept in the AN-2 which has just left on its regular hop.

Our first culinary experiment took us quite a long time, but our housewarming dinner was crowned with glory. It might even have got a mention in the camp log had we not found other, more important things to enter: the first bearings, the temperature of the air, the strength and direction of the wind.

We are awakened by the roar of engines and begin that day with registration of aircraft as they arrive from the mainland.

Before long the "taxi" brings from the "station" a second group of permanent inhabitants for the floating settlement—A. D. Malkov, a meteorologist, N. E. Popkov, an astronomer and A. I. Dmitriev, a hydrologist. That evening, the round top of a second tent rises from the snow near to ours; a little way off we start cutting "bricks" of firm, compact snow for

a hut in which to make magnetic observations. The variometers, which record all variations in the Earth's magnetic field, have to be isolated from metal in the vicinity. The thick snow walls provided dependable protection for the delicate instruments.

But it is too soon to be thinking of scientific findings; we have to handle far less complicated instruments: shovels, ice-picks and crow-bars. Again we clear a run-way, we chop off the rounded, wind-worn "foreheads" of ice, we smooth the sharp-edged frozen drifts and the wavy ridges. It is high time we receive heavy planes direct from the mainland.

When they come—one flown by Kotov, the other by Moskalenko—we hurl our spades and ice-picks down and line up between the markers along the air-strip. Our dark outlines against the dazzling snow give the airmen a clear picture. The enormous skis skim the uneven surface and bounce, throwing up a cloud of fine snow. A moment later the blinding hurricane of the slip-stream sends us scattering in all directions.

The airmen are in no hurry to unload. Taxiing to the end of the run-way, the planes swing round and go up and down rolling out the bumps in the snow like tractors at work on the land.

Each fresh page of the log now refers to the arrival of new permanent dwellers. The two wireless-operators, Kurko and Razbash, install themselves and their equipment in a special tent. Now there is an aerial humming in the wind, and the floating arctic wireless station goes on to the air with its own call signal. Tryoshnikov comes back from the mainland, bringing with him oceanographers, meteorologists, aerologists.

The floating station may be likened to a ship. The ice-floe is moving steadily north-eastward in the general movement of the arctic drift-ice. All the same, we often consider our ice-floe, which now has over a dozen tents erected on it, to be completely firm and stationary ground.

Soon, however, the oceanographers remind us of the sea. For two days they toil away on the edge of the camp. At first they bore a cavity about half a metre deep in the ice; then they pack it with explosives. There is a muffled boom and the round crater is full of tossing sea water. A hydrologist's winch is fixed over the hole and then everything is covered by a tent. Blow-lamps are brought into the tent where it soon becomes as warm as in a bath-house.

As he fixes the winch, Shamontiev, the oceanographer, slips off his warm jacket and sweater and works in his shirt-sleeves. He laughs.

"Reminds me of a stokehold."

"Only it's a bit deeper here, Volodya, than on your Sheksna river," remarks Tryoshnikov, writing down the results of the first measurement. "Three thousand nine hundred and forty-nine metres fifty centimetres. Nearly four kilometres."

"Aye, it's an ocean all right," says Shamontiev with a note of respect in his voice.

"Well, it's not the first time we've floated on the ocean together, Volodya," Tryoshnikov gives Shamontiev a friendly pat on the back where the steel muscles stretch his damp singlet.

It was certainly not by chance that the chief of the floating station had chosen this energetic young scientist to be his chief assistant. Vladimir Shamontiev, who is now 30, used to work as a stoker on river steamers. During the war he served in the ranks as an infantryman. Then he took up oceanography and, as a student, did his practical course in the

storm-swept waters of the North Atlantic, working in ships of the herring fleet.

Alexei Tryoshnikov, now a M. Sc. and Hero of Socialist Labour, has had a somewhat similar career. Born of peasant stock, he took a course at a Workers' School and intended to become an agronomist. Then the Soviet Union was thrilled by the epic voyage of the *Chelyuskin*. The mysterious Arctic tempted the young man to abandon the agricultural college for the geography department of a university. Then he passed several winters on remote islands and during the war, when the arctic waters were infested with German U-boats, he did patrol work among the ice-fields. And then, after the war, he became something like a nomad on the ice of the Central Arctic Ocean.

On this ice-floe, near the North Pole, work men of different generations but with a single aim in life. The aerologists Vasili Kanaki and Platon Poslavsky have an assistant, Igor Tsigelnitsky, young enough to be their son.

One serene morning on the outskirts of the camp the aerologists flew a hydrogen-filled balloon on which was attached a thermometer, an automatic recording instrument and a miniature wireless transmitter. Tsigelnitsky released the balloon, while Poslavsky observed it with a theodolite. Through the lens he could see clearly the silvery sphere shooting up into the blue sky. After ten seconds it had reached 60 metres. From the tent Kanaki received the first wireless signal on his set.

The temperature of the air was much lower at high altitudes than on the surface of the ice-floe. At 7,000 metres minus 50 degrees centigrade was recorded. The automatic explorer of the high altitudes of the atmosphere was visible in the theodolite at 15,000 and 20,000 metres. The outer pressure on the balloon was still decreasing so that the balloon grew constantly larger in volume from the inward pressure of its hydrogen content. At 24,000 metres the envelope burst; the wireless set in the tent got no more signals. All three aerologists sat down to work out their results. Soon they would have to pass them on to the Hydrometeorological Service in Moscow. On that day atmospheric readings were being taken simultaneously at Igarka, Sverdlovsk, Kuibyshev, Makhach-kala and at our floating station.

Our settlement has now become an active scientific research station; and we are still expanding. The rows of tents form a small street; there are a good hundred tons of stores in the depot and planes keep coming in from the mainland.

We have a visit from a helicopter. Its plump belly glowing red in the slanting rays of the morning sun, it descends on us at a steep angle. Its long broad rotors stir up a veritable snow-storm.

We shower congratulations on its pilot, Alexei Babenko. Only two years ago he flew over the Volga-Don Canal, hovering over the locks as they were photographed from the air. Then he astonished Moscovites by appearing over the Dynamo Stadium with bunches of flowers for the winners of the football cup.

The helicopter's appearance in mid-Arctic creates no less a sensation. Its crew has the job of protecting the floating camp. In the event of upheavals or cracks in the ice or of floods, a helicopter can take off easily and look for a more suitable site for the camp.

A GAZ-69 lorry has previously been delivered to the "station." But though it is known as a general purpose vehicle it is far from being amphibious and is no good as an ice-breaker. The problem of getting it across the water and over the ice-ridges is solved by the helicopter which makes room for the GAZ-69 in its capacious bosom.

By air come the unassembled parts of a tractor and the bulky plant of the future power station. We are kept busy for two hours unloading them. As for the helicopter, it serves as crane and in a matter of minutes transfers the heavy metal parts to the place where they are to be assembled.

Soon real houses begin to appear at our camp on the ice-floe. Pre-fabricated, transportable dwelling-houses. Light in construction but sturdy, they are made out of heat insulation materials; they can be moved about the ice on runners and towed by tractors.

Moskalenko, who came to take us further north, flew the first cargo of parts for this type of houses made in the factories of Moscow and Leningrad.

"Tell Moscow and Leningrad that we are very, very grateful," the inhabitants of the floating settlement tell the pilot as he gets ready to leave. "Tell them not to forget us and to write more often. Our address is simply 'Near the North Pole.'"

III. Over the Lomonosov Mountains

How can one write of a mountain range which no geologist has ever surveyed and on which no alpine-climber has ever set foot? How can one describe mountains which do not appear on the map in the familiar wavy brown lines? Can one get any sensation of the unevenness of the Earth's surface when down below, under the wings of the plane, there is nothing to be seen but a boundless white plain of drifting pack ice.

To our pilot Viktor Perov these questions seem pointless. In selecting an ice-floe to land on, he places full confidence in both astronomy and oceanography. The co-ordinates are exactly those given in his briefing.

Station SP-3



The number of parallels has come to an end, for the North Pole is only some 70 kilometres distant. We are flying over the eastern slope of the submarine Lomonosov Range. Under this thin, brittle ice-crust below us, under the deep ocean water that lies below the ice, the surface of the Earth heaves up to heights of several kilometres.

But the commander of the aircraft is now thinking on a different, more modest scale. The flat ice-field between the ridges looks broad and spacious. There is not much snow on top of the ice. In a word, we can land.

Perov brings the plane into a slow glide. The tail drops, the cabin floor slants under our feet and the skis glide smoothly over the soft snow.

We drag the cumbersome tripod of the hydrological winch over to the open freight hatch and lower it to the ice. Senior mechanic Zaitsev announces in the ringing baritone of a tram conductor: "Station! We've arrived, comrade 'hoppers.'"

The word 'station' has a double meaning. Oceanographers use it in referring to the various points on their deep-water research. Besides that, we have a two-day stay on the ice ahead of us—that is the usual time of waiting at a station on the long air journey. If our travels were to be depicted graphically, the map of the Central Arctic would show a mass of points connected by wavy lines. For almost a month Cherevichny's group, flying in the neighbourhood of the North Pole, has been making hops from floe to floe in order to study the submarine Lomonosov Range. Our everyday speech already flavoured with the shop talk of the airmen and geographers was enriched with some queer scraps of jargon during the expedition. For instance, people who belonged to the Cherevichny detachment were known as "hoppers."

The hops were daily occurrences. Planes left in various directions. And now, while Gudkovich, the oceanographer, is blowing a hole in the ice for the hydrologist's winch, from the cabin of the plane comes the peek-peek of the Morse apparatus, and, floating high over the fuselage, swaying slightly in the wind, hangs the cardboard kite of the temporary aerial. Mishustin, the wireless-operator, taps the transmitting key, then jots



something down in the log. Beside him, in the narrow doorway between the wireless and the pilot's cabins, stoops the tall figure of Perov.

"Everything's in order, Viktor Mikhailovich," the wireless-operator reports to the commander of the aircraft. "Both of them are in position. Cherevichny asks what the ice is like here."

"Normal," says Perov with a nod. "Tell them we're starting work."

It is two other sections of our group that are "in position"—that is, at their appointed places on the map. About 100 kilometres distant from us, above the western slopes of the Lomonosov Range, is Cherevichny with Ostrekin, the magnetologist, and Sokolov, the oceanographer. Two others from our detachment, Sorokin the airman and Gakkel, the oceanographer, are over the spine of the submarine range, about 50 kilometres away.

We pitch the tent close to the still shape of the plane, get the gas-stove burning inside it, and carefully spread on the folding table a sheet of thick, crackly paper—a unique copy of a bathymetric map of the Central Arctic—a map that you will not yet find in any atlas. The deep-blue ocean is dotted with figures: 3,000 metres, 4,000, 5,000, again 3,000, 3,500.... Four-figure numbers showing depth indicate the courses of Nansen's *Fram*, Papanin's ice-floe, and the ice-breaker *Sedov*. Among some of the black figures are others in red. They form the frame of a pale-blue belt that stands out in contrast to the deep blue of the rest of the Arctic Ocean. This belt begins at the Novosibirskiye Islands and stretches northward, cuts the neighbourhood of the North Pole and then runs south again towards Greenland: 4,000 metres, 3,000, 2,500, 2,000, 1,500. The depths shown in red decrease and we see the outline of the ocean floor as a steeply curving line. The submarine Lomonosov Range which was discovered by Soviet Polar explorers cuts the basin of the Arctic Ocean into two parts.

This bathymetric map of the Central Arctic is an everyday working document for our expedition. But to each of us that sheet of paper is as dear as the years of our lives.

"Do you remember, Pavel Konnych, how we first caught that range with our sounding-lead? In 'forty-eight, wasn't it?" Zaitsev asks Senko the magnetologist.

"That's not a thing to forget," says Senko. "You should have seen how excited our honoured Professor was then. Why, you couldn't recognize him."

Laughing and joking, we recall that frosty, blustering April of 1948 at one of our floating camps. How lively and keyed-up the usually so staid Professor Yakov Yakovlevich Gakkel had been. He had reason to be. During the short distance we covered in a few days drifting, the depth of the ocean below us had abruptly decreased by a good 1,500 metres.

"And do you remember that sounding?" asks Zaitsev, pointing to the figure 4,039 at the very Pole. "The way that seal bobbed up, eh?"

Senko smiles ruefully.

"We let it get away that time. We shot it, but couldn't get it out of the water. That would have been a skin for the museum!"

"We nearly got ourselves into a museum that time—a museum where all change for the next world," says Zaitsev.

What a cheerful, brave man he is, Hero of Socialist Labour Alexei Zaitsev. I remember the way he remained completely calm and good-humoured when, six years ago on the uneven ice near the North Pole, he was getting Kotov's plane ready for a risky take-off.

Now it is the turn of the navigator, Nikolai Zhukov, to put in a word. He has remained silent up to now.

"And I remember the North Pole in 'thirty-seven. In my time, incidentally, the Earth's axis behaved a sight more peaceably."

In reply to our questions Zhukov recalls what slow progress the first Soviet airborne expedition to the North Pole made. That was a long while back.

"Oh, a long while back! Real prehistoric, to my way of thinking. In 'thirty-seven I'd just entered the flying school. . . ." The moon-faced, dark-eyed Perov smiles, and we can all easily picture to ourselves the sly, long-legged youngster our present solid-looking commander was in those days.

Nikolai Zhukov has been flying in the Arctic for twenty-two years. But although Perov is a full twelve years younger than his navigator, he is no greenhorn at arctic flying. He has flown dozens of times over the North Pole and its vicinity, over all that vast region which, until recently, geographers used to call the "inaccessible zone." Sometimes he has been on ice reconnaissance flights, at other times on arctic expeditions. It was Perov who in 1950 discovered a huge floating island of ice.

There is a story from the youngest member of our party—Zalman Markovich Gudkovich the oceanographer. He is only 29, but he wears the Order of Lenin, this participant in the year-long drift of North Pole 2 station led by Hero of the Soviet Union M. M. Somov. At that time, in 1950-1951, Gudkovich had only just graduated from the Higher Arctic Navigation School; now he is collecting material over the Lomonosov Range for the thesis he is going to present for his M. Sc. degree.

All interest in the camp centres on the hydrologist's hole in the ice. Piercing the thick canvas, the sunbeams cast a diffused greenish light, and the sea-water in the round hole, framed with wet grey ice, looks inky blue. The flares of the blow-lamps are reflected in the lacquered surface of the winch's tripod; over this window into the ocean hangs an iron sinker at the end of the thin steel hawser.

Gudkovich glances at his watch and nods to Zaitsev without saying a word. Zaitsev raises the catch, and the drum of the winch begins to turn and pay out the hawser. The sinker plunges into the water with a splash. For the first few minutes the dark water in the hole is silvered with countless bubbles, only to resume its glassy stillness. Were it not for the squeak of the drum, one might think that the sinker had already reached bottom. But the indicator on the winch records every metre of depth 100 . . . 500 . . . 1,000. . . . The drum keeps on turning.

"Here's a present for old Neptune," Zaitsev tosses a twenty-kopeck piece into the water.

The coin sinks slowly, twisting and turning in the current like an autumn leaf in the wind; the gleaming circle is visible for quite a long time in the dark mass of water.

"Look out, it's reached bottom," Gudkovich says quietly, looking at the indicator. The drum turns no longer, the arrow has halted at the figure 2,164. Gudkovich opens the log and starts writing.

"Interesting," Perov drawls, jotting a few words in his notebook. He passed the piece of paper on to the second pilot Denezhkin and says: "Run to the wireless-set, Gena. Tell Viktor to pass this on to Ivan Ivanych."

Zaitsev gives the crank handle of the winch engine an energetic swing, and wiping his greasy fingers, says solemnly:

"Kiev to the North Pole. Submarine motor race. Sta-a-a-art!"

The engine bears the mark of the Kiev Motorcycle Works. The even throb of the engine revives in our minds scenes that are far from our life today. Under the bright Ukrainian sun, past fresh green orchards, the motor-bike of the kolkhoz postman slips by. Maybe, this very day, in some village school, young students of geography are being thrilled to read the announcements of the Academy of Sciences about the work of Soviet scientists in the Arctic. Maybe some curly-haired boy in the top form, who has never set eyes on the sea or on a piece of ice is now discovering for himself a remote unknown world, and, bewitched by the romance of travel, suddenly makes up his mind once and for all what he is going to do in life. Sometime in the future, on the eternal ice-fields of the Antarctic, in a tent over which a red flag floats, he will remember this day and with filial gratitude will let his mind linger on the discoverers of the arctic submarine range.

The Morse key of the aeroplane's wireless keeps up a constant rattle in unison with the winch engine. Soon Denezhkin comes into the hydrological tent with replies from Sorokin and Cherevichny: the camp over the summit of the range returns a sounding of just over 1,000 metres, the one working over the western slopes has recorded a depth roughly the same as ours.

Having taken their sounding, Gudkovich and Zaitsev set about organizing their hydrological station while Perov and I take a look at our surroundings. The sun has set behind heavy lowering clouds, and the ice-ridges, which had stood out in sharp contrast before, now melt into shapeless whitish piles. But in the diffused light we can see more clearly than in day-time the ice in our immediate surroundings and notice things about it that were hidden in the blinding sunshine.

"Look, that ice is dirty," says Perov, pointing to a bluish block of ice whose polished surface is speckled with dark brown spots. "That's sand or clay, I can't tell which. Those dark spots are not on the surface but inside the ice."

"This is fresh-water ice," Gudkovich announces in a professorial manner after spitting out the ice he had crushed between his teeth. "There's not the faintest trace of salt."

In other words, the deposits of earth that lie pressed between the transparent blocks of blue ice have been brought here to the North Pole from the Lena or the Kolyma or some other great Siberian river. These deposits have been drifting for many years.

"Take a closer look. See what nasty things we've caught," says Zaitsev.

Squatting on our haunches on the edge of the hole we peer at the wet ice. On it lie a small jelly-fish and a tiny shrimp.

"We could have caught a fish too, but we felt sorry for it," says Gudkovich.

"Just like that fisherman who caught a golden fish," Zaitsev laughs. "Wait a little, it'll soon come back to us."

We wait patiently and, sure enough, before long a small fish flashes in the water deep down, looking just like an exhibit in an aquarium. Though its back is grey and its fins are silvery, that fish of the North Pole was a golden fish to us.

"Look, look, the ocean's breathing," Gudkovich whispers excitedly.

The flat, mirror-surfaced patch of sea in the hole in the ice suddenly swells and becomes a convex lens. What is happening? Is it some mighty wave on its playful rolling course in the midst of the open sea that is paying us a visit in our icy fastness? Or is it the repercussion of a distant storm that was raging not long ago somewhere in the Atlantic or, perhaps, in the Pacific Ocean? Here, over the Lomonosov Range we are at what might be called the watershed of the Central Arctic basin which is connected with the two greatest oceans of the world.

Again the engine chugs; kilometres of steel hawser are spun on the drum; out of the depths comes the "whirler"—a hydrological instrument with the curved blades of a small turbine in its head and a broad rudder in its tail. The "whirler" surfaces slowly; when it is still some thirty metres from the surface it can be seen clearly in the sunlight that penetrates the ice. It seems to be glowing phosphorescently in the deep blue water and resembles a miniature vessel, a Nautilus à la Jules Verne.

What follows is much more prosaic. Drawing the "whirler" from the water and drying it carefully, Gudkovich takes a pencil and notes in the log the speed and direction of the submarine currents. Zaitsev opens the long slender cylinders of the bathymeters and pours samples of ocean water into bottles. Firmly corked, well wrapped up and packed in cases, they will be flown to Leningrad for hydro-chemical analysis.

"A tricky business," Zaitsev grumbles. "Takes an awful lot of bottles."

Perov looks with commiseration at the two hydrologists. The scientist and the enthusiastic young student are pale and tired after two days watch on the ice.



A new issue of the illustrated wall newspaper.

"Patience, you victims of science, you'll be able to catch up for lost sleep on May Day."

It is only a few hours to May Day. We are in a hurry to finish our work at the hydrological station and to return "home"—to the floating camp of Cherevichny's group. We shave carefully to the strains of music—our wireless man has managed to pick up Moscow. The familiar voices of the Moscow Radio announcers resound with unusual clarity under the tightly stretched canvas of our tent. The weather report speaks of the beginning of a heat wave and early thunderstorms in the Ukraine; and we, it must be confessed, experience a twinge of envy for the inhabitants of those latitudes. However, we are so excited about the approaching holiday that we clean forget that up here, beside the North Pole, the temperature is minus 23° centigrade.

A short run along the smooth ice, half-an-hour's flying and we are "home," at Cherevichny's camp. All the "hoppers" are there for the occasion. The planes are flying red flags and are drawn up in a line as straight as that of the tents which are decorated too. Cherevichny is to be seen walking about in a fur-lined jacket unbuttoned to reveal a carefully chosen tie and the gold star pinned to his shirt. That veteran arctic pilot Matvei Kozlov, quite contemptuous of the frost, has changed his reindeer-skin hat for a regulation naval cap tilted at a jaunty angle over his grizzled locks. Mikhail Ostrekin wears a solemn, important air as if he is preparing to give us a lecture: this spruce, well-groomed man is the scientific leader of the group.

The inhabitants of this nameless ice-floe near the North Pole feel quite at home there and are ready to receive the guests among whom is Mikhail Vasilyev; he has already flown at least a dozen times to see us, but this time his IL contains boxes of cakes, crates of oranges and apples, cases of champagne as well as drums of petrol. And Burkhanov, who is also among the visitors, brings with him Dmitri Shcherbakov, the academician-secretary of the geology-geography section of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

It is already nearly midnight by Moscow time on the last day of April when the ILs, their broad golden-hued wings gleaming in the sun, taxi up to the stopping-place and the meeting begins on the run-way.

Cherevichny climbs on to the platform over which floats the Soviet flag. To be candid, our intrepid, energetic commander is not a natural orator. But we greet his terse and rapid phrases with warm applause. Dozens of pairs of eyes watch this pioneer of polar discovery, this veteran of the Arctic, with friendship and affection. We know that behind every word Cherevichny speaks there lie years of hard work and danger.

After the airman comes the sailor, in the person of Burkhanov, head of the Main Northern Sea Route. His speech, delivered in measured tones, contains nothing about his personal experiences, but many of those who listen recall that eighteen years have passed since Burkhanov, then a young engineer, made his first arctic voyage, eighteen years devoted to mastering the northern sea-ways.

Then Academician Shcherbakov speaks.

"I am, of course, a beginner at your business, comrades," he says.

This distinguished geologist and explorer of the Pamirs and Tien Shan speaks so vividly about the submarine arctic mountain range that we have the impression that the ice under our feet has suddenly given way and that



During leisure hours.

the remote peaks of the Lomonosov mountains are rising to the surface of the ocean.

"There are many things in geology that have to be revised and revalued; we shall have to adopt a different attitude towards certain features of the ancient history of our planet. It is a joy to see Soviet people in the van of these new discoveries, pioneers of a new history of mankind."

The May Day celebrations near the North Pole move from the platform on the air-strip to the tents where the light from the gas-stoves casts a blue illumination. Bottles of champagne well cooled on blocks of ocean ice sparkle in the rays of the setting sun; cakes and oranges melt in the mouth.

But we have little time for fun. While the loud-speaker is bringing us from Moscow sounds of the May Day celebrations, Burkhanov and Shcherbakov are flying on a holiday tour of the drifting stations and our camp is starting another working day. After the party and a few hours sleep, airmen and scientists leave on their next flights to carry on with their research on the submarine Lomonosov Range.

Before us lies a long and far from easy journey over the ice—the way home.

Ogonyok

EVENTS AND OPINIONS

Discussion on the Positive Hero in Literature * Indian Actors in the Soviet Union

In connection with the Second Congress of Soviet Writers, there were discussions in newspapers and magazines recently on the principles of representing the positive hero in literature. The question is not a new one, but at every stage in the development of Soviet literature the necessity arises of turning again to the theoretical aspect of this problem in the light of new tasks and on the basis of accumulated experience.

This time the discussion started with an article by the critic A. Protopopova published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. This article, entitled "The Strength of the Positive Hero," puts forward as the main task of literature the creation of an ideal character.

Protopopova writes: "The creation of the image of an ideal character appears today as one of the basic questions of modern Soviet literature." She contends that recent books dealing with life today have no positive hero who could capture the imagination and admiration of our young readers, or could call forth any irresistible wish to stand side-by-side with the hero.

The main reason for this situation, she thinks, is a theory which gained a certain currency among some writers, a "theory" that could be summarized as follows: "In life there exists no one without flaws; literature reflects life as it is; a person without flaws is without interest, even boring, not a man but an icon."

Opposing this point of view Protopopova says: "This 'theory' about the enduringness of the imperfect hero, who, though positive as a whole has some flaws added for the sake of picturesqueness, must, of necessity, restrict any writer who allows it to creep into his mind. The theory clips the wings of the writer's creative fantasy and robs his positive characters of shining, impressive and memorable personality."

Protopopova's contention is vigorously disputed by the writer A. Beliashvili

in an article, "Heroes, Real and Artificial," in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

"In my opinion," he writes, "conflict in a literary work means the clash, or, rather the fight of positive against negative. The hero can be in a struggle both against the exterior negative phenomena of life and against personal, interior ones which come from his own qualities. The theoreticians of the 'ideal hero,' by robbing the hero of this internal fight, drag us back, willingly or unwillingly, to conflictlessness. . . ."

"Undoubtedly the basical and leading hero of Soviet literature is the hero-creator, the bearer of high moral qualities who presses forward to new victories. But that is, so to speak, only one side of our positive hero. Would it be right if our literature portrayed only this side? Does it mean that all heroes came to their victories easily and freely, without overcoming not only external obstacles but also internal ones? Does it mean that all positive characters are included in some special category of people, or rather of immaculate angels who have no weaknesses or faults that could be overcome in the process of character-formation?"

"Of course there is in our life plenty of people who are flawless and ideal. But could our full life, abounding in various types of people, be properly represented only by such a character in literature? . . ."

"In works of literature the important thing is not the number of negative and positive characters and not even whether their actions are good or bad in certain cases; the important thing is, what idea, what thought is finally triumphant, with whom and with what idea the author sympathizes and what idea, useful, and example-giving in a political or moral sense, the reader gets from a given work. The main thing is, who is inspired by this work and what he is inspired to do."

Beliashvili's views are shared by the writer Vera Ketlinskaya, whose article,

"Heroes and Conflicts of Our Time," also appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. She argues against Protopopova who in her article criticized Ketlinskaya's novel *Days of Our Life* on the ground that it has no ideal hero. Protopopova's objections to this novel are expressed in her article as follows: "The young factory director Nemirov is the only figure of great stature in the novel. He could have served as an example to others if the author, after having conceived a wonderful image, had not given him faults which, even in the eyes of a reader with no great knowledge of psychological nuances, jar with the spiritual make-up of this character. They are uncalled-for, artificial, and obviously added for 'picturesqueness.' As you read, you feel how the author tries to deck out the hero here and there with little flaws so as to avoid the risk of being accused of painting everything in rosy hues."

To this Vera Ketlinskaya replies: "The critic picks out an outstanding character that catches her eye and she feels hurt. 'Oh! what an ideal hero he could have been if the author had not forced him to make mistakes, to dislike criticism, to overvalue his own strength!'"

"Protopopova did not go deeply into ideas and problems which stirred the author, did not bother to think about all that is in the image which she whips out of the novel, to prove her theory of 'ideal hero.' Similarly, Batmanov in Azhayev's *Far From Moscow*, is not an ideal character, but simply an intelligent, experienced leader. And I do not know whether he could be squeezed into our critic's 'ideal' framework. But it was Nemirov not Batmanov, whom I painted. It was a character which I like very much; it was created as a result of long observation and thought. And, by the way, I believe that a man of Nemirov's type could become an excellent leader after he has passed through his trials, made his mistakes and had the benefit of Party training and criticism. It was this very 'process of becoming' that fascinated me. I could not possibly have robbed Nemirov of his qualities, his character, his mistakes. . .

"Specifications of this kind for positive heroes, who are presented in the process of becoming, detract from the fruitful work of writers in the same way as did the earlier 'average,' or 'statistical' approach to the typical. If this tendency were continued to its logical conclusion, it would rob Soviet literature of its active role in the life of today and its part in the formation of the new man. Literature is a reflection of life in its development, not a handbook of good manners."

The opinions expressed by Beliashevili and Ketlinskaya gave rise in their turn to adverse comment during the discussion, both from writers and readers. For example, one reader, E. I. Poterina, who lives in a village of the Krasnodar region, stated in a letter to *Literaturnaya Gazeta*: "When he argues heatedly for a positive image possessing some kind of flaw, A. Beliashevili fights against those who consider that an author has the right to create positive characters which have no flaws."

"Beliashevili recognizes, of course, that in our life there are 'pure' positive characters, but he is deeply convinced that they are not so important in literature as good, positive persons with certain negative traits, on the ground that a predilection for ideal, positive heroes is harmful. This contention—an erroneous one, to my mind—stems from another, even more erroneous one: 'In works of literature the important thing is not . . . whether their (the heroes') actions are good or bad in certain cases, but first of all what idea is finally triumphant . . . what useful, example-giving idea . . . a reader gets from a given work.'"

"To a reader it is important whether a hero in certain circumstances acts well or badly, because the reader judges people both in life and in literature not by their words, however beautiful they may be and not by their declarations however interesting they may be, but by their deeds. It is from the deeds, not from the words, of a hero that a reader receives something useful and example-giving for himself."

Beliashevili's standpoint is also attacked by E. Rusakova and Y. Ivashchenko in their article, "The Ideal Hero" in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. They disagree also with the way in which Ketlinskaya in her article puts the question about the obligation to portray "the process of becoming" of the hero's character. Ketlinskaya said: "When we present an already-formed hero we rob our reader of the main thing—the excitement of sharing emotions in the process of formation of character. A hero of that kind does not evoke any active feeling because he is excluded from the life-process of the formation of the new man—a process in which the reader takes part,—and simply floats before the reader as a didactical example."

"From these words of Ketlinskaya," write Rusakova and Ivashchenko, "one concludes that outside the formation of character there cannot be a real hero in our literature, and that the reader is attracted not by the hero's personal quali-

ties, or his deeds—his essence—but by the actual process of formation of his character. Our literature itself, and even many characters in Ketlinskaya's books, reject her point of view. Let us name some of the books she mentioned as readers' favourites, and as books which influenced our readers most—*How the Steel Was Tempered*, *The Nineteen*, *The Young Guard* and *The Story of a Real Man*. In each of these books, side by side with characters shown in the process of formation, there are already-formed characters. However this does not weaken the books; on the contrary the books are powerful ones and their 'already-formed' heroes have nothing of the didactic in them. Levinson, in *The Nineteen*, for example, is an already-formed Communist, but is he schematic? Take this character out of the book, and you will take its heart out.

"Levinson, Zhukhrai (in *How the Steel Was Tempered*) and the commissar Vorobyov (in *The Story of a Real Man*) were formed 'somewhere outside the covers' of the books. But they are true artistic images and are vividly realistic: all the traits of their already-formed characters are shown in action, in fighting against and overcoming difficulties. Of course, when they created these images the authors did not think out beforehand all their positive qualities: they found them in life, and in the characters of their contemporaries.

"That is how it happens that, in disagreement with her theoretical conclusions, Ketlinskaya names as the best works of Soviet literature the books in which live side by side two ideal types of heroes."

The writer G. Medinsky in his article, "The Chief Aim," in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, agreed with many points in the articles of Beliashevili and Ketlinskaya, but he stated: "One cannot help seeing in these articles the unnecessary polemic heat which leads towards onesidedness."

Medinsky argues against Ketlinskaya's statement: "Literature is a reflection of life in its development, not a handbook of good manners." He writes: "We know another, basis-making formula that is valid for us: Literature is a manual of life. Our great Russian literature in its best examples always carried a grain of teaching and preaching. To forget or ridicule that grain when the aims and tasks of literature are being formulated is deplorable in any Soviet writer. This neglect of the task of teaching is the basic mistake of Vera Ketlinskaya."

The film producer Sergei Gerasimov questions the very term "ideal hero." "I feel," he writes in the article "Artist

and Hero" in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, "that the very concept 'ideal hero' is inadmissible either jokingly or seriously. The hero in literature should be a living being by his very nature. Otherwise he will remain outside the artistic requirements which it is our duty to insist upon, when we deal with the literature of Socialist realism. However, I think that Beliashevili's attempts to establish a certain minimum of flaws to 'liven up' the so-called hero will always prove to be insufficient. A book is significant only when the individuality of its author is significant. No mechanical combinations for the purpose of 'strengthening,' or 'sharpening' or 'warming up' can make the book more significant, if the author himself is not possessed with an idea that consumes him and forces him to speak with his full voice to the people."

The theatrical producer Alexei Diky agreed with Gerasimov, and his article "Heroics and Satire," in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* concluded as follows: "What heroes do we need? To my mind the question is a scholastic one. Regimentation has no place in this matter. We need good heroes and different heroes but in all cases heroes taken from life, not heroes appointed to life as a kind of decreed 'ideal' or abstract 'evil.' And if a living hero is shown by the author in all the concreteness of his surroundings, in all the richness of his relations, then he will show his essential character; he will evoke admiration or contempt, hatred or sympathy, an urge to fight against him or to emulate him—in short, everything but indifference. Then he will be able to 'stir our hearts'; then will come into the world of drama all those great human feelings which are so valued by reader and theatre-goer."

Important contributions to the discussion on the positive hero were made by Latvian writers. The Union of Latvian Writers held a discussion on the same subject, a discussion which arose over an article by V. Kalpins, editor of the newspaper *Literatura un Maksla*.

In the article, entitled "What Is Needed for the Development of the Positive Hero," Kalpins stated that in many post-war Latvian works of literature the positive hero was pale, schematic, lifeless. The reason lay in an erroneous view about the essence of the image of the positive hero. In real life one did not meet a "model" man in whom everything was good. Dialectics taught that all subjects and phenomena have positive as well as negative sides. That was true of man too.

"That means," he went on, "that in the character of a positive hero there must

be both positive and negative traits, traits which struggle against one another; otherwise the character loses dynamic and development stops."

These basic concepts in his article were repeated by Kalpins in his speech at a meeting of the board of the Union of Latvian Writers. This started a lively discussion. Nearly all the writers who took part disagreed with Kalpins and insisted that he interpreted the laws of dialectics too literally.

Zanis Griva challenged Kalpins' contention that no hero devoid of negative traits could exist. The writer's palette, he said, should not be limited to black and white paints. It was necessary to use the whole range of colours which life gives to writers. But Kalpins' "prescriptions," he said, led towards the impoverishing of life and towards schematism in literature.

"When Kalpins proclaimed the internal fight as the main moving force in the development of character," said Griva, "he unconsciously vulgarized Marxism and forgot the influence of environment and society. One should remember also about literary genres and their specific nature. This specific nature of genre imposes upon a writer certain unavoidable limitations. One should not, for example, demand development of character as an essential part of a short story."

The thesis that a genre's specific nature affects the portrayal of the hero was supported also by Arvids Grigulis. "It is not always possible or necessary in a work of small scope to show character dynamically in clashes, in internal struggle," he declared. "It is also wrong to demand characterization of all personages in a novel to an equal extent."

"The artificial inclusion of negative traits in the image of a positive hero is in no way a remedy against schematism. Do we not have many 'grey' books, the heroes of which go through internal travail and redeem themselves? The heroes have so-called internal struggles, but the readers are unmoved by them."

"One should not dissociate oneself from the aim which the author has placed before himself. If he wants to present an ideal hero, it is absurd to demand that he must 'add' to his hero a few negative traits. But it is a completely different thing when an author's aim is to depict the struggle of a man against the remnants of capitalism in his mental make-up."

It was from that standpoint that Grigulis criticized certain concepts of the article by Beliashvili.

That the duty of writers is to create clear images of positive heroes which can become an example to others was the

basis of statements by Anna Sakse, and F. Rokpelnis.

"We must not forget the educative role of literature," declared Anna Sakse. "The language of images is at our disposal. The strength of our influence on the reader depends upon how clear that language is. No intentions, however good they may be, will save a writer if his images are dull. It is impossible to create images according to prescriptions. Irena, the heroine of the play *Splinters* by M. Zuntner and A. Vilka, is, it seems, supplied artificially with negative streaks for 'livening-up' purposes. This breaks the logic of the image and makes it unconvincing."

The many different opinions expressed regarding the positive hero during the discussion indicate the great number and variety of artistic trends in Socialist realist literature in the Soviet Union.

The recent visit by a delegation of leading Indian artists to the Soviet Union was an unqualified success.

Their first concert was given in the Bolshoi Theatre, the greatest theatrical building in Moscow. There was a crowded attendance and the theatre was decorated with the flags of the Soviet Union and of the Republic of India. Before the concert, which was attended by the leading figures of the Soviet Government and the Communist Party, representatives of public organizations and leaders of Soviet science and cultural life, the anthems of the two countries were played. After the concert, the visitors, as representing the peace-loving Indian people, were greeted by a large group of prominent figures in the world of art on behalf of the Soviet people.

Replying to the address of welcome, the head of the delegation, the Deputy Minister of Health of India, M. Chandrasekhar, conveyed a warm greeting from the people of India, gave thanks for the warmth of the reception, and said that the visit would help to promote further cultural ties between the peoples of India and the U.S.S.R., would serve the cause of peace and the friendship between two great peoples.

The day after the concert, all the Moscow newspapers carried long articles on the concert by Soviet artists and spectators.

Writing in *Pravda*, Igor Moiseyev, leader of the Folk-Dance Ensemble of the Soviet Union said: "During one evening the audience received many vivid impres-

sions of the art of a whole people. This is truly a generous gift from the people of India to their Soviet friends. Its instructive and aesthetic value is difficult to over-estimate.

"In this concert everything appealed to the eye, the feelings and the imagination. The appearance of the performers, the images they created, their costumes, the wonderful expressiveness and plasticity of gesture, the originality of the melodies and rhythms, the exotic qualities of the musical instruments, all carried us in imagination into a world of fairy-tale, although, in fact, that world is filled with real images and feelings. . . .

"The concert became a memorable demonstration of Indian-Soviet friendship. We hope it will be the first link in a chain of reciprocal visits by cultural workers of the two countries and will strengthen cultural co-operation between them."

Literaturnaya Gazeta published an article, "The Soul of India," by the theatrical producer Yuri Zavatsky. In it he wrote: "The soul of India arose before us on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre during the concert by Indian artists; for true art always mirrors the thoughts and feelings of a people. In the characteristic and inimitable songs and dances, in the earnest, modest and noble appearance of the actors, we felt the remarkable qualities of national character.

"A song is sung, and we hear in it bitter suffering, optimism, patience and colossal internal energy, which proves that a people who through centuries of oppression have preserved their own national culture and their own art created through thousands of years, have now straightened their shoulders.

"The styles of classical dances in India have a long history of their own. For example, the *Bharata Natya* style was evolved two thousand years ago. The dance gives us a glimpse through the veil of ages, and while we follow the captivating movements and listen to the music and song which tell the story that is being illustrated by a girl's dance, a whole panorama of life unrolls before us. Although we do not understand everything, although some of the gestures and plastic movements which conventionally express certain feelings and ideas are unfamiliar to us, yet the *Alarippu* and *Tillana* dances and, more especially, the dance *Kathak* wonderfully danced in the classical style by Tara Chaudhri, captured our imagination. . . .

"For three centuries the dynasty of dancers whose representative today is

Gopinath has cultivated from generation to generation the methods of one of the oldest classical styles, the miming style of *Kathakali*. The lively personification of feelings which are portrayed by the actor by means of gesture, movement or merely by facial miming, make a lasting impression on one's memory. Gopinath changes his expression and pose, and immediately we see before us a living statue personifying 'Love' or 'Valour' or 'Compassion'. . . .

"We saw on the stage a charming lyrical dance in the *Manipuri* style, *Krishna and Radha*, danced by Suryamukhi Devi and Tombinou Devi, fiery passionate folk-dances with drums by Babu Singh and Nadya Singh, and a festive dance of the Naga Tribe, by all four dancers. These dances told us much. The dancers with drums do not pray, but fiercely demand rain from the god. The dance of the Naga Tribe is a real rejoicing of the people at harvest time.

"Some of the songs and musical pieces recall those of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. The warm, even voice of Vinayak Rao Patwardhan enchants his listeners. The classical melodies *Khayal bahar* and *Tarana* are full of remarkable runs and virtuoso passages, and their poetical quality goes straight to the heart. The song-poems of Rabindranath Tagore, the folk songs which hail the harvest and the joy of life, the lyrical songs, sung by Mira Chatterjee, Asa Singh Mastana and Surinder Kaur convey a vivid impression of the musical and vocal culture of the people which includes many schools, trends and styles.

"The concert became for us workers in the field of Soviet art the discovery of a new world, and a revelation of the treasures of India's art.

"Feelings, thoughts, emotions captured in song, music and dance, touched our hearts, gave wing to our imagination and made us feel a deep love and respect for the great people who created this mighty and inimitably wonderful works of art. These works reflect the people's innermost feelings, and that is why they bring closer the hearts of the Indian and the Soviet people."

The visit by the Indian artists to the Soviet Union is evidence of a new, bright stage in the development of friendly and cultural ties between the peoples of India and the Soviet Union.

CRITIC

MISCELLANY

THE CENTRAL WRITERS' CLUB

Founded during the lifetime of Maxim Gorky, the Central Writers' Club has become the principal meeting-place of Moscow's men of letters, their professional and social centre. Any member of the Union of Soviet Writers is entitled to join it.

The club's directing body is a council, elected by the membership by secret ballot for a term ranging from eighteen months to two years.

The object of the club is to assist writers in their creative work and provide them with recreational facilities.

The various sections of the Union of Soviet Writers—prose, poetry, drama, criticism, juvenile literature, screenplay, and translation—each gather at the club at least twice a month. Practically every literary work of merit comes up for discussion before the sections, some of them in manuscript form. Many a book, now well known to the Soviet reading public, passed its first test, and a difficult one too, at the Central Writers' Club under a merciless fire of criticism.

The sections give special attention to fostering creative contacts between writers in different fields of literature. A poet, for instance, may attend the review of a book popularizing some scientific discovery. Authors of books for children are frequently guests of the novelists' section. An author of adventure stories may join in a discussion on how to write about factory life.

Members take full advantage of the numerous cultural facilities provided by the club. Concerts, exhibitions, literary gatherings are always well attended.

Several hundred Moscow writers attend the lecture courses on social and political subjects, history and literary theory, offered regularly at the club. Should you drop in at the handsome mansion which houses the Central Writers' Club on one of the days set aside for study you would be very likely to find a lecture on aesthetics in progress in one room, a class in economics in another, a class in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement in a third

The club has a well-stocked library and there is hardly a Moscow writer who has not had recourse to it for his work.

The club Council makes every effort to satisfy the diverse interests, tastes and inclinations of Soviet writers. The programme for one week may include a report on the international situation, an evening dedicated to the memory of a notable actor—and a talk by a fashion designer, with the latest styles demonstrated. A chart of the heavens on the wall of the same room the next day indicates that a lecture about plant life on Mars is scheduled. And on another day all eyes may be drawn by the crystal cup sparkling on the table, while the U.S.S.R. football champions describe the most exciting contests of the season and complain, like enough, that Soviet literature produces too few novels about sports. . . .

Indeed, Moscow writers have people of the most diverse professions and accomplishments as guests of honour on club days (as these evenings, with their exceedingly varied but always stimulating programmes are called). They may be innovators of production who have discovered ways of raising labour productivity; foremost gardeners, horticulturists, field crop farmers; chess players, Mikhail Botvinnik, the world chess champion, and other Soviet Grandmasters, returned from a tournament abroad, for example; whale hunters; delegates to an international youth festival; old revolutionaries who went through Siberian exile and later, together with Lenin, began to build the Soviet state; nuclear physicists, reporting on progress made in employing atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

A. Bakulev, President of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Medical Sciences, was the speaker at a meeting presided over by Leonid Leonov. His subject was the latest achievements in cardiac surgery.

The poet Boris Pasternak read his new translation of Goethe's *Faust* at the Central Writers' Club; poets, dramatists, translators, theatre workers took part in the discussion that followed.

As guest of honour one club day, Grigori Alexandrov, the well-known cinema director, described his impressions of a recent trip to England.

One programme was dedicated to the memory of the Polish poet Tuwim. Admirers of his remarkable talent—writers, readers, students, artists—were present at the meeting which was presided over by Ilya Ehrenburg.

Club day programmes have featured a talk by K. Alabyan, the eminent architect, on the architecture of new Moscow, and a report delivered by fliers and scientists back from the Arctic regions on the daring research being conducted amidst the Polar ice.

The archeologist B. Rybakov, Corresponding Member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, brought to mind bygone civilizations in his account of the results of recent excavations. While A. Sternfeld, Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee for Cosmic Navigation and winner of an international prize for his contribution to astronautics, gave his audience a fascinating glimpse into the future in a report entitled "On the Eve of a Cosmic Flight."

Moscow writers show no less interest in talks by artists, press photographers and journalists returned from trips to regions where new land had been brought under the plough and grain crops raised for the first time last year.

Artists frequently exhibit their work in the Central Writers' Club. Moscow's finest actors readily accept invitations to present concert programmes there.

Here, in their club, Soviet writers are wont to celebrate the memorable dates in their literary careers. Here, too, they are feted on special occasions.

The walls of the old hall, however, have been shaken not only by ovations but also by real literary battles. For this room is the scene of heated argument about books that have drawn the attention of both literary opinion and the reading public; it is the scene of animated discussions on creative problems of all kinds.

The voice of the reader, too, is frequently heard in the Writers' Club, and that voice carries weight. Readers are given the floor for discussion unconditionally. Twice a month the doors of the club open specially for them and they are invited to "Literary Gatherings" at which prose writers, poets, playwrights, as the case may be, report on their work and plans and give readings from their books.

The Central Writers' Club is the meeting-place for Soviet writers and visiting

writers from foreign countries. Its guests have included Paul Eluard, Leon Kruczkowski, Louis Aragon, Elsa Triolet, Kuo Mo-jo, James Aldridge, Roger Vailland, and many other writers from China, India, Korea, Great Britain, France, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Iceland, and other countries.

Trips to places of historic interest near Moscow are a feature of the club's activities throughout the summer and very often in the winter. Members of the Central Writers' Club have visited Leo Tolstoy's house in Yasnaya Polyana, the scene of the famous Battle of Borodino, the U.S.S.R. Agricultural Exhibition; they have inspected old mansions that have been turned into museums, gone on boat trips on the Moscow-Volga Canal.

The club has special hunting and fishing groups provided with all the necessary gear for both sports, i. e., nets, rods, boats, etc. It also rents a number of hunting lodges near Moscow available to members at all times.

The necessary funds for these activities are obtained from various sources. There are membership dues, which are very small and no burden to the writers at all. Certain sums of money are allocated by the Union of Soviet Writers and the U.S.S.R. Writers' Fund for the maintenance and operation of the Central Writers' Club. A portion of these are used to finance the club's small staff headed by a director. All the director's organizational, managerial and administrative work is supervised by the council.

The club also has a "Wives' Council" which is duly represented in the Club Council. Writers' wives attend lectures and study groups and take part in the club's cultural activities. Among the special activities offered them are dress-making and embroidery circles and foreign language classes. Gymnastics and dance groups have been organized for members' children. And on New Year's Eve, of course, a huge tree is decorated in the big hall and Grandfather Frost himself arrives to distribute the gifts that have been piled up in the rather small but cozy club restaurant.

Thus, morning and evening, on weekdays and holidays, there is always something interesting going on at the Moscow Writers' Club, the foremost literary club in the country.

LEV KASSIL

*Vice-Chairman of the Council of the
Central Writers' Club*

Literary Links with Our Sister Countries

An evening devoted to the literature of the People's Democracies was held recently in the village library of the Talgar district near Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan. About three hundred people attended. Z. Senkevich, a collective farmer from the Karl Marx kolkhoz spoke about Julius Fučík's *Notes From the Gallows*. P. Yegotin, secretary of the Communist Party organization of the Talgar Machine-and-Tractor Station read a paper about *Land*, a novel by the Korean author Lee Gi Yeng. *Under the Banner of Freedom*, a novel by the Hungarian writer Tamas Aczel was the subject of a contribution from R. Kurochkin, a scientist at the local geophysics station. The director of the local technical school for mechanized farming, K. Chaplinsky, spoke about *Machine-and-Tractor Station*, a novel by the Bulgarian writer Andrei Gulyashka; I. Ryzhevalov, a school-teacher, devoted her talk to *Sun over*

the Sangkan River by the Chinese writer Ting Ling.

The Society for Cultural Relations between Kazakhstan and Foreign Countries announces that the total print of books by Chinese, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Hungarian and writers from other People's Democracies published in the Kazakh language in recent years amounts to about 400,000. Books by Kazakh writers have been published in Chinese, Hungarian and Bulgarian. Czech and Hungarian philologists and literary scholars are translating books directly from the Kazakh.

A Monument to Belinsky



A monument to Vissarion Belinsky has been unveiled in Penza, his birthplace. The work of E. Vuchetich, it consists of a bronze figure on a pedestal of grey polished granite.

Lithuanian Art

Lithuanian artists of several generations were represented in an exhibition held in Moscow. Visitors saw the work of Lithuania's classical painters, sculptors and draughtsmen and also of well-known contemporary artists, and of the younger generation.

One of the leading exponents of the realistic school in 20th-century Lithuanian painting is Petras Kalpokas (1880-1945). An artist with a broad compass, he painted a large series of genre canvases as well as many portraits and landscapes. Kalpokas depicted the characteristic features of his native land.

Kajetonas Sklerius-Skleris (1876-1932) excelled in portrait painting. The simple grave faces of the men and women of the people that he painted (*An Old Estonian*, *Portrait of an Old Woman*) are full of will-power, an inner dignity and a love of life.

The landscapes of the contemporary Lithuanian artist Jonas Sileika are distinguished by their rich colouring.

A. Zmuidzinavicius is known as the poet of the Neman. In his pictures nature is always linked with the life and activities of working people.

The work of graduates from the Vilnius College of Art, including painters, sculptors and draughtsmen, is full of promise and originality.

In Commemoration of Petrarch

An exhibition devoted to Petrarch has been opened at the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Library in Leningrad on the occasion of the 650th anniversary of the birth of the poet.

The library possesses over one hundred

editions in various languages of Petrarch's sonnets and other poems as well as of his philosophical writings. Among exhibits are translations from Petrarch done both before and after the Revolution.

Exhibition of Rembrandt Etchings

An exhibition of Rembrandt etchings has been opened in Moscow at the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum. This museum has six Rembrandt oils including such masterpieces as "Ahasuerus, Aman and Esther," "The Portrait of My Brother's Wife," and also a collection of over one hundred etchings which is one of the

finest in the world. These etchings are now on view to the general public.

They represent four decades of Rembrandt's artistic activity. They include about a dozen self-portraits, many portraits of Rembrandt's mother and of his contemporaries, and a large number of landscapes and scenes from everyday life.

The Musical World Discusses Khachaturyan's New Ballet Music

The Union of Soviet Composers held recently a discussion on the music of Aram Khachaturyan's new ballet *Spartacus*.

Most of those participating, including the composer Kabalevsky who summed up the discussion, assessed the new ballet as an important addition to the composer's works and to Soviet music as a whole. In the opinion of Dmitri Shostakovich, the most valuable feature of the ballet music was the deep feeling and conviction expressed in it. It was a great achievement, Shostakovich said, to have introduced into the ballet a line of symphonic

development. In this way *Spartacus* was an advance on Khachaturyan's previous ballet *Gayaneh*. Shostakovich noted specially the beauty, melodical richness and expressiveness of the music of the final scene. At the same time he pointed out one or two shortcomings in the new work. "*Spartacus* is a genuine tragedy, very serious and very lyrical from beginning to end," he said, "but it needs touches of humour as contrast." In the course of the discussion critical remarks were made about the composition of the libretto, the treatment of certain characters and the style of the musical imagery.

New Talent for the National Theatres

The ballet companies of the theatres of Moldavia, Kazakhstan and Kirghizia received additional talent for their 1954-55 season. It came from the Leningrad Ballet School where there are several groups in which at present 140 future ballet dancers of different nationalities are training. Here you may find Bashkirs, Buryat-Mongolians, Kazakhs, Kirghizians, Moldavians, Ossetians, Tajiks, Yakuts. Here, too, study pupils from the People's Democracies.

The largest group to graduate last year came from Moldavia. In the diploma concert of this group figured both solo and collective numbers—a Moldavian folk dance, scenes and fragments from ballets (Chaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Glazunov's *Raimonda*, Asafyev's *Flames of Paris*, Gliere's *Red Poppy* etc.).

At present the Leningrad Ballet School is training ballet dancers for Turkmenia. Next spring a large group of Ossetians will complete their courses.

Exhibition of Oriental Art



In the Uzbekistan State Museum at Tashkent a large exhibition of Oriental art was organized recently. It included examples of applied art, painting and sculpture from India, Iran, Indo-China and Japan.

Visitors were attracted by the many examples of chased copper, the work of Indian artists of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the section devoted to Japanese art, carved ivories, porcelain and woodcuts were exhibited.

Indo-China was represented by carved furniture of the 19th century; Iran by metal-work, ceramics, carpets and miniatures by the famous 17th-century Persian artist Riza Abbasi.



In the Young Guard Museum

The town of Krasnodon in the Donbas has a museum called The Young Guard. Its exhibits are devoted to the heroic deeds of a group of Comsomol members who during the Second World War, when the town was under fascist occupation, formed an underground resistance organization.

The museum has recently received 400 new exhibits and documents. Among

them are the personal belongings of two members of the group—Ulyana Gromova's school notebook and an album of poetry that belonged to Ivan Zemnukhov—and the original Comsomol membership cards issued by the organization.

Many school children, students and young miners come in excursions to the town of the heroic Young Guard.

An Azerbaijanian Artist Exhibits

A Moscow gallery recently held an exhibition of the works of the Azerbaijanian artist Latif Kerimov. Kerimov was responsible for the architectural ornaments decorating the entrance and archways in the Nizami Museum at Baku and in the Pavilion of the Azerbaijan Republic at the Agricultural Exhibition. He also works as a book illustrator and designs ceramics. He was represented at the Exhibition by decorative vases and many designs for Azerbaijanian carpets.



In Yesenin's Home

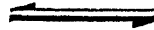
A museum devoted to Sergei Yesenin, the Russian lyrical poet (1895-1925), is to be opened in Yesenino (formerly Konstantinovo), the village in the Ryazan region where the poet was born. Yesenin's house is now being restored. The museum will contain copies of the works of the poet, photographs and personal belongings.

In Memory of Repin

On the 110th anniversary of the birth of the great Russian realistic painter Ilya Repin (1844-1930) a meeting was held at the village of Repino (formerly Kuokkala) near Leningrad. Thousands of people—workers, writers, artists, actors—came from Leningrad for the occasion.

Repin spent thirty years at this village

in an estate known as Penates on the shores of the Gulf of Finland. He died there and was buried on the grounds. At Penates, Repin was visited by Maxim Gorky, Mayakovsky, Kuprin, Mendeleyev, Pavlov, and Chaliapin. Now people come from all over the Soviet Union and abroad to visit this place.



SOVIET LITERATURE

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· SOVIET WRITER · PUBLISHING HOUSE ·

TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

The Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers sends its warmest greetings to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

We, representatives of the literature of the many nations inhabiting our great country, express our gratitude to our Communist Party for the wise concern it shows for the steady advance of our literature to new achievements and victories.

The Soviet people, inspired and led by the Communist Party, are unflaggingly working to advance heavy industry, the foundation of Socialist economy, and doing their utmost to strengthen the might of the Soviet State; for the first time in world history, the incalculable energy of the atomic nucleus is beginning to serve man in our country; within a brief span of time hydroelectric power stations have been built one after the other on our greatest rivers, the Volga, the Ob, and the Angara; in a single year a total of over seventeen million hectares of virgin or long-uncultivated soil has been brought under plough. All this is taking place in a country where everybody is studying and the enrollment at higher schools has reached two million:

In every respect, both material and spiritual, the fraternal peoples of the Soviet Union are thriving and forging ahead as never before. The rostrum of our Congress was an expression of the fraternal co-operation of men of letters writing in different languages, but united by a single aim—the struggle for construction of Communism, and peace and friendship among all nations.

Our Gorky looked forward to “the second congress of Soviet literary workers being adorned by the presence of scores of writers from the West and the East, from China and India. . . .” These words have now come true. The progressive writers of the whole world, our friends and guests from the People’s Democracies and from the capitalist countries, have brought to us a message of friendship and greeting, and together with us they have raised their voices in defence of life, against death, against the intrigues of the sinister forces that are prepared to involve the nations in war.

The decaying world of capitalism is seeking to plunge mankind into a state of spiritual vacuity and moral degradation. Imperialist literature is out to degrade man; to arouse his basest instincts, to black out Gorky’s inspired watchword: “Man—how proudly the word rings!”

From its very inception, our literature has been imbued with unshakeable faith in man and a radiant future for mankind. Its heroes—fighters for the happiness of all humanity—have become near and dear to the ordinary people of all countries. The strength of our literature lies in its vital bonds with the life, the thoughts, emotions and exploits of the people and the heroic struggle waged by the Communist Party.

Soviet literature is at one with the aims of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The history of the literature of our many peoples is a history of the development of the Socialist system, of the struggle waged by the people against great odds, of great victories won in grim battles.

In their novels and stories, poems and plays, verses and songs, Soviet writers are seeking to convey a faithful picture of reality in the process of its revolutionary development.

The new Charter of the U.S.S.R. Writers' Union, adopted at our Second All-Union Congress, describes the lofty mission of the literature of Socialism thus:

"In the conditions of the gradual transition from Socialism to Communism, the role of Soviet literature both as a factor in the remaking of society and as an active medium of education is immeasurably enhanced.

"It is the mission of Soviet literature to convey the beauty and grandeur of Communist ideas in terms of lofty art, effectively to fight the survivals of capitalism in the minds of men, to present its heroes in all the multifariousness of their labours and life, social and personal, and to portray boldly the contradictions and conflicts of life. Soviet literature both reflects the new and helps it to triumph.

"It is the mission of Soviet literature to cultivate with true revolutionary fervour the patriotic sentiments of Soviet men and women, to strengthen friendship among the peoples, to further cement the unity of the mighty camp of peace, democracy and Socialism, to affirm the ideas of proletarian internationalism and fraternal solidarity among the working people."

Our new Charter thus expresses not only what we are striving for, but also what we have already achieved. These qualities have won for Soviet Socialist literature the love of its readers, the men and women who are building Communism, and made many of our books the friends and companions of Soviet people in peace and war.

At the same time we, delegates to the Second Congress of Soviet Writers, know full well that notwithstanding all these achievements, the lofty mission of our literature is still far from having been adequately accomplished. The rapid development of all aspects of life in the land of Socialism demands embodiment in monumental works written with great artistic mastery. For this one must know well and deeply cherish the history of our heroic Party and our new society. One must be able to treat profoundly of the struggle of the new against the old and moribund, and affirm the beauty and grandeur of Communism, not hesitating to show the contradictions and conflicts of life. Only through persevering and selfless labour, the labour of the true master of the written word, combined with a high culture and consummate skill, shall we succeed in satisfying the spiritual demands and requirements of our reader, the man of the people.

Socialist realism marks a new step forward in the history of world art. This is acknowledged today by people in all the lands of the world which are reached by the works of Soviet authors. And the influence of the ideas and images of our literature is increasing the world over with each passing year.

The keynote of our Second Congress was severe criticism and self-criticism. Writers of different generations and nationalities are united by their common striving for the strictest observance of the highest ideological and artistic standards. Yet we know that we have done less for the people than we can do, than we must do!

We must write so that young people and children will look upon our literary heroes as their comrades and emulate their example. We must write so that working-men who read us will follow our heroes into the world of creative endeavour and struggle for the affirmation of the great new social order founded on noble and rational relations among men.

We must write so that our message shall sound to the dispossessed in the most distant lands as a message from a friend and a brother, a message that lends strength in the bitter struggle, a paean to freedom.

The method of Socialist realism presupposes a wealth of creative individuality, a wide variety of literary genres, a friendly rivalry of different creative trends. There

must be a tireless search for the best possible artistic media to serve as a vehicle for the great truth of our ideas and the richness and multiformity of our life.

The Second Congress of Soviet Writers, while criticizing the weaknesses and shortcomings of our literature, called upon all Soviet men of letters to develop still more profoundly the finest traditions of classical Russian literature, the literatures of the fraternal Soviet peoples, and world literature; boldly to affirm the established traditions of our Soviet Socialist literature, creatively to assess the valuable experience in the field of art gained by our friends abroad.

Soviet writers are in duty bound to effect a decisive and all-round improvement in the highly important matter of advancing and educating new literary talent, in conformity with the behests and traditions of Gorky.

The Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers wishes to assure the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that the workers in the sphere of literature, who constitute a large contingent of the Soviet intelligentsia rallied around the Communist Party, are resolved to redouble their efforts and live up to the expectations of the people.

The Second Congress of Soviet Writers is an important historical landmark in the development of our literature. The writers are determined radically to improve the work of their Union, strengthen self-criticism in their ranks, put an end to all manifestations of complacency and conceit, work for high artistic standards. The writers are determined to carry on a constant struggle against all departure from Socialist realism, all manifestations of alien bourgeois-nationalist and cosmopolitan ideology, all naturalistic and formalistic bourgeois influences.

The Soviet writers are at one in thought and feeling with their people and their Party.

We uphold the cause of world peace and are ready to work heart and soul for the triumph of that cause. Today sombre storm clouds once again darken the world sky. And if the crime of unleashing another world war should be committed, the Soviet writers will rally to the aid of their Socialist Homeland, dedicating their talent, their art, their very lives to it as selflessly as they did in the late war with German fascism which ended in the destruction of Hitlerite tyranny.

Long live the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Central Committee!
Long live Communism!

SECOND ALL-UNION CONGRESS
OF SOVIET WRITERS

NEW PRESIDIUM AND SECRETARIAT OF THE UNION OF WRITERS OF THE U.S.S.R.

The first plenum of the Board elected at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers was held on December 28, 1954.

Organizational questions were discussed at this plenum, and a presidium and secretariat of the Board of the Union of Writers of the U.S.S.R. were elected.

The presidium consists of the following writers:

I. ABASHIDZE	V. KATAYEV	S. SHCHIPACHYOV
S. ANTONOV	A. KORNEICHUK	M. SHOLOKHOV
M. AUEZOV	V. LACIS	K. SIMONOV
V. AZHAYEV	B. LAVRENYOV	V. SMIRNOV
N. BAZHAN	L. LEONOV	L. SOBOLEV
P. BROVKA	G. MARKOV	A. SURKOV
N. CHUKOVSKY	S. MARSHAK	N. TIKHONOV
I. EHRENBURG	V. PANOVA	M. TURSUN-ZADE
A. FADEYEV	N. POGODIN	A. TVARDOVSKY
K. FEDIN	B. POLEVOY	P. TYCHINA
F. GLADKOV	D. POLIKARPOV	A. VENCLOVA
A. GONCHAR	A. PROKOFIEV	S. VURGUN
A. KAHHAR	B. RURIKOV	V. YERMILOV
A. KARAVAYEVA	J. SCHMUUL	N. ZARYAN

The new secretariat is composed of:

V. AZHAYEV	L. LEONOV	V. SMIRNOV
N. BAZHAN	B. POLEVOY	A. SURKOV
A. FADEYEV	D. POLIKARPOV	N. TIKHONOV
K. FEDIN	K. SIMONOV	

A. SURKOV was elected First Secretary of the Board of the Union of Writers of the U.S.S.R.



ROMAN KIM

GIRL FROM HIROSHIMA

To the valiant defenders of the little village of Uchinada who raised the banner of resistance to the establishment of military bases on Japanese territory.

THE BOMB

I

SUMIKO heard the voices of her parents through her sleep. They were talking in the kitchen. She had not seen her father since the previous Saturday. He worked in a machine shop in the Minami-takeya quarter, and when there was urgent work on hand he did not come home for weeks at a time.

"I hear they bombed Tokuyama the other day and dropped leaflets in Japanese," her father said with one of his hollow coughs. "They said they'd raid us tonight for certain. That means our turn has come now. You must go earlier and get a place. . . . Better go to the Western Square, there are good slit trenches there. You may have to stay for several days. I shall look for you there."

"Perhaps we ought to go up to the mission school?"

For a while they conversed in whispers, but gradually the whispering grew louder.

"Our neighbours went to Shimane and brought back a sackful of pumpkins," Sumiko heard her mother say angrily. "But we have nothing to eat except these rotten sweet potatoes. I've told you time and again."

Sumiko's eyes are so bad she can't read any more at night, and Eichan is getting boils. . . ."

"They'll relieve us the day after tomorrow."

"Today is Sunday."

"I promise you I'll go to Arifuku straight from work as soon as the next shift comes on. We'll be getting some cigarettes and I can exchange them for food."

Their voices dropped to a whisper again. Then after a brief silence her mother sighed and said:

"Sumiko tore her trousers again. She's forever climbing trees. Just like a boy. . . ."

Her father laughed softly.

"You can make over my old canvas trousers for her. I've burned them so badly I shan't be able to wear them in any case."

He said something else Sumiko could not catch. There was a rustling of paper and Sumiko heard her mother say:

"Sumiko stayed awake for a long time waiting for you. But I shan't wake her. Let her sleep while she can. She won't get much sleep tonight most likely."

The lid of the shoe box shut, and the door slammed: her father had gone off to work.

After breakfast her mother packed up a bedroll and a handbag to take with them to the bomb shelter, and, putting on a canvas cape, went off with her neighbours to work on the job which the civil defence authorities had assigned to their district—to tear down a row of old houses in the Matsubara quarter not far from the railway station, so as to widen the street leading to the river. Before she left, Sumiko's mother told her to take care of her little brother Eichan and see that he didn't go far from the house. In case of an alert the neighbourhood ARP warden would collect the children and take them to a shelter.

"And don't forget the handbag," she added, "or we'll be left without anything."

Sumiko sat down under a tree by the fence to mend her trousers while Eichan played in the gutter with the little boys from next door. They were playing at war. Some of them ran about swinging their arms and shouting: "Don! Don!"—they were the American bombers. Others sat on the ground waving sticks and imitating the noise of anti-aircraft guns: "Bang! Bang! Ta-ta-ta!" Others hurled themselves with wild squeals on the "enemy bombers," ramming into them as hard as they could—these were the Japanese Zeros.

A boy wearing a broad-brimmed straw hat crept up to the fence and squirted a jet of water at Sumiko from his bamboo water pistol, wetting her trousers and work-box. Sumiko jumped up and ran out of the gate after the boy, but before she could catch him, he dived through the gates of a house down the road shouting: "Girls shouldn't fight! Sumiko's a donkey!"

Her feud with the boy in the straw hat had begun when he had chalked a crude drawing on the fence opposite her house of two freakish figures with enormous heads under an umbrella, and scrawled the names Sumi-chan and Take-chan underneath. Take-chan lived at the far end of the street: his parents, who had come here from Nagoya, made their living by selling umbrellas made of waxed paper.

When she returned from work, Sumiko's mother took her two children and set out for Western Square where deep slit trenches had been dug in the shade of the trees.

The evening was hot and stuffy. Many people sat beside the trenches fanning themselves or were sponging themselves with wet towels at the hydrant. The enemy planes were expected to appear around midnight. Shortly after the monastery bell had chimed twelve, the hum of aeroplanes was heard from the direction of the sea. They were coming from the southwest, from Kure. The sirens wailed. The enemy planes, evidently flying from aircraft carriers, were machine-gunning the coastal area. Just before dawn the all-clear sounded.

The old woman who lived next door began to tell her beads and whisper a hasty prayer.

"I expected a big raid, but it wasn't bad at all," said Sumiko's mother, straightening the kimono on little Eichan who was sleeping in her lap. "Last time in May there were many more planes and they dropped bombs all the time."

The old woman smiled, revealing a row of black-lacquered teeth.

"Just the same they came over, the way they promised. It was nice of them to warn us in advance. Very polite."

Everyone laughed at this remark.

"I didn't close my eyes the whole night," Sumiko's mother said, yawning and covering her mouth with her hand. "I didn't go to bed the night before, either. I went down to the shore for seaweed. But now we can go home and have a good sleep."

A man with a grey moustache said: "They only scared us. It wasn't worth such a solemn warning. They didn't bomb so much as keep us awake all night."

"Never mind," said a young woman carrying her baby on her back. "Now we can sleep until tomorrow evening if we like."

Everyone hurried home.

The mother bathed Eichan in a tub on the verandah and lay down with him on the mat, not bothering to undo the bedrolls. Sumiko went outside into the yard to brush the mud off her trousers.

The street was quiet. The neighbours had pulled down the shutters on the verandahs and were also asleep. The silence was broken only by a bullock cart driven by an old peasant who had fallen asleep with his head resting against a refuse barrel. A group of new recruits in uniforms without insignia marched silently past, escorted by their relatives carrying flags, bundles and banners with the names of the recruits.

Tomi-chan, the little lame girl from next door, limped past whimpering. Sumiko hung her trousers up on a branch and looked out into the street. The boy in the straw hat was standing outside the big house throwing stones into the gutter. Sumiko went out into the street and crept quietly up behind him. The boy was throwing stones at a doll lying in the gutter, imitating the whistling noise and crash of bombs. Tomi-chan stood beside him, her face covered with her hands, wailing:

"My dolly . . . you'll break her . . . you'll break her!"

When the boy had thrown his last stone and remained unarmed, Sumiko leapt at him and punched his head. He swung round and caught her by the sleeve, she ducked her head and tried to butt him, but he hit her in the stomach with his knee, lost his balance and fell, pulling her down with him on to wet stones of the gutter.

At that moment Tomi-chan cried out: "Aeroplanes!"

The boy paused in the act of pulling Sumiko's hair and looked up. She caught his hand and tried to get up, but he whispered: "Don't move. They're P-51s. . . . No, B-29s."

Sumiko too glanced up. High up in the blue morning sky three black dots moved. For some reason there was no air raid alarm. The planes flew with a barely audible drone.

The boy let go of Sumiko's hair and said: "Maybe they're ours. . . ."

Sumiko shook her hair into place and looked up again. The planes had disappeared. Just then she saw a tiny parachute open up in the air and begin slowly to descend.

"No, they're not ours. . . ." the boy sat up on his haunches and ducked his head. "Someone jumped. . . ."

Sumiko reached for the doll lying at the boy's feet.

"That's Tomi-chan's. Don't you dare tease her. . . ."

"What did you hit me for!" cried the boy, and swung at her.

Suddenly there was a flash, followed by a dull explosion. A puff of white smoke appeared near the parachute, then a fiery tail. Sumiko flung herself at the bottom of the ditch and covered her face with her hands. That same instant a searing, blinding streak of white, green, and orange lightning flashed before her tightly-closed eyes. Then came a terrific roar. The earth leapt, spun round and a burning hurricane swept over the ground. There was another deafening roar. Everything shook and hot chunks of soft earth fell on Sumiko, and she lost consciousness.

4

When she came to, she found herself being carried by two men wearing canvas capes and black masks covering mouth and nose. They were walking over ground littered with blackened stones, tiles, scorched boards and black sacks. A thick black smoke crawled over the ground, the air was filled with black soot and rain came down in drops as black as India ink.

"Mama!" cried Sumiko, but she did not hear the sound of her own voice.

She felt a searing pain in her left shoulder. Her whole body ached violently. She cried out soundlessly and lost consciousness again.

After a while she awoke. One of the black sacks which had been lying beside a twisted tram-line standard stirred, tried to rise and fell down. A man in black, blood-stained rags from which the buttons hung loose ran over to the men who were carrying Sumiko. He opened his mouth and seemed to be shouting, but she could not hear his voice. He looked at Sumiko, opened his mouth again, beat himself on the head and breast and fell on the ground. People, a great many people, all black and all in rags, were running over the heaps of black ashes and all of them were waving their arms and opening their mouths. Sumiko shut her eyes. Her head swam. She dropped into oblivion.

She was dimly aware of being laid down on something hard and cool, of people—not in black this time—standing beside her. A woman in a tall white cap with a red cross on it and a white gauze mask over her nose and mouth went down on her knees and bent over her. Through the roaring in her ears she caught a faint whisper. For some time she could hear nothing, but gradually the noise in her ears began to subside.

She heard a woman's voice say: "No wounds, apart from some leg bruises and a burn on the left shoulder."

"The burn is rapidly discolouring," said a man's voice. "But why is the scar so big?"

"Is she from the centre?"

"I believe she was picked up near Sanjo bridge; these others were found in Kamiya quarter and near the Fukuya department store."

A man in a white mask waved his hand in front of Sumiko's face.

"Her eyesight is unaffected."

"Hurry down to the river. There are many children down there, some of them may be still alive."

They poured something into her mouth, but she coughed it up because it hurt to swallow. They bathed her face with a wet towel and it came away quite black. From far away she heard screams and loud cries, the woman's white cap and mask turned red, then purple and kept changing colour. Sumiko closed her eyes and fell asleep.

All this happened early in the morning of August 6, 1945.

That morning Sumiko, a little girl of ten who lived in the city on which a bomb of a new type was dropped, lost her mother, father and younger brother.

THE TAG

1

Sumiko woke up, opened her eyes and turned her head. An ice bag lay on her forehead, tied on with a piece of string. She had been awakened by a jolt—someone's foot had brushed against her head. Two men wearing black masks and yellow canvas capes with a black-and-green design picked up the girl on the mat next to hers and carried her out. The girl's face was covered with a scorched cloth.

A nurse in a white cap and mask wiped the mat with a wet cloth, went to the little board on the wall over the mat and rubbed off the writing in Japanese characters under No. 219. Then she folded her hands in front of her face and bent her head.

Sumiko turned carefully and saw a similar board over her own mat. Hers was marked No. 177. It was very stuffy inside the tent. The air was filled with a yellowish, evil-smelling smoke.

"So you're awake?" An elderly woman in a white mask leaned over her. She gently wiped the little girl's face, straightened her robe and called over the nurse. The nurse took a thermometer out of her pocket, shook it and put it into Sumiko's mouth. A little girl with a bandaged head lying in the corner groaned and retched. The attendant went over to her, lifted her up and held her over a basin.

The nurse took the thermometer out of Sumiko's mouth and wiped it.

"You'll feel better now, dear," she said. "Lie still. You've been asleep for more than a week. . . . Sometimes you woke up but you went back to sleep again at once. We fed you with rice water and made injections and gave you medicine to make you sleep."

"I'm going to die," said Sumiko. "That's why I only have a number."

"We didn't know your name. That's why we only gave you a number. Now tell me your full name."

Sumiko complied. She told the nurse where she lived and looked straight into her eyes. The nurse turned away and said nothing for a while. Then she asked:

"Has Sumi-chan any relatives? In some other town, or in the country perhaps?"

Sumiko clenched her teeth hard and stared up at the ceiling of the tent. She felt as if she were choking. Her throat ached and her shoulders shook. She was crying without tears. The nurse laid her hand on the little girl's head.

"I have an uncle," whispered Sumiko presently. "He lives in the country."

"In what prefecture? What is the name of the village?"

Sumiko wrinkled her forehead in an effort to remember. Then she shook her head.

"I used to know, but now I've forgotten. . . . Mama went there in springtime for beans. It's Mama's oldest brother." After a pause she added: "My father works in a machine shop. He wasn't home at the time. . . ."

"Where is his workshop?"

The nurse took a pencil and slip of paper from her pocket.

"It's in the Minami-takeya quarter. If you go from the bridge. . . ."

Sumiko noticed that the nurse was not writing anything, and she lapsed into silence. The nurse put away the pencil and paper and laid her hand on the little girl's forehead.

"Someone will come for Sumi-chan very soon. They will be looking for her now through the address bureau. Other little girls have been found that way and taken home—by relatives from other towns. Sumi-chan will also be found. Now lie still and get well. Only don't lie on your left side." She bent down low and whispered: "And don't cry or you'll wake up the others."

Sumiko turned over on her right side and covered her face with her hands.

2

The next day the doctor, an old man with a black bandage over an eye, examined Sumiko and said something in some foreign language to his assistant.

"So far everything is all right," he said to the nurse. "You can remove the bandage."

"My shoulder hurts and it itches," said Sumiko. "And my eyes too. I see a white light in front of me all the time. . . ."

"Never mind, you'll soon be all right. You only have a burn. No other injuries."

The young assistant doctor placed a small mirror close to Sumiko's shoulder.

"See? That's all there is."

Sumiko saw a purplish red scar like a pickled plum on her shoulder.

Two weeks later she was allowed to get up and walk about the tent. There were ten other little girls in the ward. They had brought another girl in the place of the one who had occupied the mat next to Sumiko's, but after three days purple spots had appeared on her body and she had started to vomit, and one night men in canvas capes came and took her away. The nurse had wiped the name Kawano Teko off the board and folded her hands in front of her face. A new patient, hardly more than a baby, had been brought almost at once. She too had died a few days later, and a man in a canvas cape carried her out. The nurse wiped one name—Mieko—off the board. The little girl had been too small to know her surname.

The patients were very quiet. They conversed in undertones as if afraid that someone outside might overhear them. Outside the tent was the big world where something terrible and incomprehensible had happened. Now and again people in white smocks and white masks came to them from that outer world. And sometimes the doctors called in stretcher-bearers, also in white, who took the girls away somewhere and brought them back again. But the girls who were carried away by the men in the canvas capes never came back.

The wind at times carried a suffocating, evil-smelling smoke into the tent. The girl with the bandaged eyes who lay next to Sumiko told her it was the smoke of funeral pyres. They must be burning the dead somewhere near by.

3

Relatives from Shizuoka and Wakayama came for two of the girls in Sumiko's tent. They had searched for a long time, inquiring at all the hospitals and refugee camps. They had been to Ugina and Saije and in the surrounding villages, and had quite despaired of ever finding the girls when someone had suggested trying the tents on Hiji Hill not far from the park.

Sumiko cried when the girls went away with their relatives, and the attendant tried to comfort her.

"Someone is bound to come for Sumi-chan soon," she said. "Her auntie will come for sure."

"I have no aunt. I have an uncle."

"Then your uncle must be looking for you. And he'll come soon."

That night a mist appeared again before Sumiko's eyes, and her head began to ache violently. The tent was full of smoke, but this time it did not smell badly and Sumiko guessed that pine branches were being burned somewhere near by to drive away the mosquitoes. Later on the wind turned and the smoke disappeared, but Sumiko could not fall asleep; her burn itched unbearably and her arm was sore from the frequent blood tests. Somewhere far away dogs howled.

The nurse and the attendant were sitting on a piece of straw matting beside a barrel which served for a table, conversing in undertones. They had taken off their masks and were fanning themselves. Sumiko lay with her eyes closed, pretending to be asleep.

"The first Americans arrived by plane yesterday," whispered the nurse. "Only doctors and newspaper correspondents so far. The doctors have come

to study the effects of the bomb. I saw them today at Hijibashi. They had things looking like big thermometers stuck into the ground. Checking on radiation most likely. . . ."

"Kitano-san told his assistant the Americans had ordered him to submit all the data to them," said the attendant. "They are going to examine the patients."

"I heard," said the nurse, "that one American woman correspondent bought a piece of asphalt with a small pair of metal heel plates embedded in it. When the bomb exploded the asphalt melted, and the person who had been standing on it disintegrated. All that was left of him were the heel plates. They were very small ones, so it must have been a schoolboy. She will take that fragment of asphalt back home as a souvenir. Hang it up in her parlour, I suppose."

They both fell silent for a while listening to the howling of the dogs.

"A dog got into the next tent last night again and nearly carried off one of the children," said the attendant. "The beasts are savage with hunger."

"Kitano-san said that 306 had severe leucaemia," said the attendant. "But yesterday when he saw the latest blood analysis he said he couldn't understand it at all. . . ."

The nurse nodded.

"I doubt whether we'll be able to save her. We ought to have made a blood transfusion at once."

One of the girls groaned.

"About 177," an attendant said, after a pause. "Kitano-san was sure it would soon begin with her. None of the cases with burns who were picked up in the centre of the city have survived. Kitano-san says that the gamma-rays. . . ."

The attendant turned round and noticed that Sumiko was lying with her eyes wide open pinching her neck. The attendant signed to the nurse and put her finger to her lips. They stopped talking.

"Am I going to die soon?" Sumiko asked.

The attendant went over to her and began to fan her.

"No, you are going to get well. We weren't talking about you. Now go to sleep."

"Yes, you were. I am Number 177. . . . Nurse. What's gamma-rays?"

"Go to sleep, go to sleep. It doesn't concern you."

Sumiko closed her eyes and pretended to go to sleep again, but the nurse and the attendant did not talk any more. Now and again they wrote something on a slip of paper and showed it to each other.

The girl with the bandaged eyes began to weep quietly, and after a while she grew delirious: she raved about white kerchiefs and white birds. When she quietened down the nurse whispered:

"I wonder what makes them all rave about something white when they are delirious?"

"I've noticed it too," said the attendant. "It's always something white."

Sumiko lifted her head.

"Me too?"

The nurse smiled: "No, Sumi-chan was punching someone all the time and shouting about some doll. . . ."

Since early morning the nurse and the attendant had been tidying up the tent; they mended the hole in the ceiling and laid fresh grass between the mats. The nurse even powdered her face and put on a fresh cap.

Dr. Kitano did not make the rounds this morning. The young assistant came instead. With him were a tall, fat-faced foreigner in uniform, and a Japanese also in foreign army uniform. Both wore gauze masks and gloves, but no smocks.

The attendant took the teapot and flower vase off the barrel and stood it beside the girl whose right cheek was one crimson burn. The pudgy-faced foreigner sat down on the barrel and passed his gloved hand over her face, turned her head and tweaked her hair. Then he said something in a loud voice to the uniformed Japanese who translated:

"This case requires close observation. Keep a detailed record of developments. Let me know as soon as the agony begins."

The assistant doctor asked the interpreter a question in a low voice, and the interpreter transmitted it to the foreigner and translated his reply.

"There is no need to administer anything. It will be of no use in any case. Watch the assimilation of carbohydrates. We are much interested in certain aspects of the worst cases. Keep blood-pressure charts."

The nurse brought the barrel over to Sumiko and slipped her robe off her shoulder. The foreigner sat down and examined the chart given him by the interpreter.

"In the immediate vicinity of zero-ground, the epicentre of the explosion?" the interpreter asked the assistant doctor.

The latter replied in a low voice. The foreigner listened to what the interpreter said, nodded and looked at Sumiko. Then he leaned over and pressed down heavily on the burn on her shoulder. She cried out. While the interpreter held her head with both hands, the foreigner tweaked her hair, stuck his finger in her mouth and ran it over her gums, and examined her eyes. His rubber glove gave off a smell that made her eyes smart. The interpreter transmitted the foreigner's instructions to the assistant.

"This case needs special observation. She was near zero-ground and there is good reason to believe that she received a lethal dose of radiation. Find out to what extent the protein coefficient has been disturbed. Her case can help us follow up the process of disturbances in blood coagulation. Very interesting."

The foreigner raised his mask, stuck a cigarette in his mouth and lit it. The interpreter did likewise. The assistant doctor asked the interpreter something about blood transfusion. The foreigner finished his cigarette, pulled down his mask and threw the butt into a corner of the tent.

"There is no need to do anything," he replied through the interpreter. "Let nature take its course. Whatever you do now is only done to salve your conscience. You said you tried giving the patients a brew made of nanten leaves, but without success. Now, that sort of thing only distorts the picture of the disease."

"Some cases develop painful sores, keloid tumours, where the burns heal," said the assistant. "The patients suffer a great deal. We tried sulphamide powder and the sores healed quickly. . . ."

The foreigner would not let the interpreter finish. He shook his head violently and began to speak rapidly.

"That was a grave mistake," the interpreter translated. "Instead of following up the development of the keloid tumour you are destroying priceless research material. Do nothing, only observe and make notes. And submit all your findings to us."

The assistant doctor asked the nurse and the attendant to step outside, and conducted a whispered conversation with the interpreter. They spoke for a long time. The assistant seemed greatly agitated; he gesticulated, beat his chest with his fist and his face twitched nervously.

The foreigner lit another cigarette and replied through the interpreter:

"You argue less like a doctor than a sentimental old woman. It is a doctor's business to serve science—that is the ethics of the medical profession. We must make maximum use of the opportunity history has afforded us to advance science in the interests of humanity. It is necessary to collect as much data as possible on the effect of radiation on the vital functions of the body and primarily on the blood. We must not forget that we are working in the interests of science and humanity as a whole. That is the vital issue at the moment; everything else is subordinated to that."

The foreigner screwed up his eyes and slapped the assistant on the shoulder. The assistant bowed. After examining the rest of the patients, the foreigner went away, together with the interpreter and the assistant. When they had gone, the nurse and the attendant opened the flaps of the tent at the entrance and waved their fans to blow out the tobacco smoke.

Before long stretcher-bearers came and took away three girls, including the girl with the burn on her cheek. The nurse went to see them off so that they would not cry. The girls did not return. A few days later the nurse wiped their names off the boards.

The assistant doctor continued to come every day. There were several more blood tests; they drew the blood from Sumiko's finger and from her arm. Three more girls were taken away from the tent. Two came back the same evening, but the third did not come back and her name disappeared from the board. Sumiko learned that they had all been taken to the American doctors' tent.

At last Sumiko's turn came. They put her on a stretcher, stuck her number plate under her head, and carried her across a wide meadow to a group of tents set up among some large rocks and fallen trees. The stretcher-bearers laid her down at the entrance to a yellow tent outside of which stood American sentries in helmets and leggings. Two Americans in masks and white smocks appeared and carried Sumiko into the tent.

She saw several Americans in masks, one or two in white coats. Among them was the tall pudgy-faced foreigner who had visited Sumiko's tent. They stripped her naked and laid her on a black leather chair with an adjustable back. Beside the chair stood a large box on wheels and a clock with coloured hands. Something clicked over her head and a large glass ball of dazzling white light flashed on. Sumiko cried out and jumped to her feet, but they held her down. She screamed louder still and struggled, but they strapped down her arms and legs and she could not move.

An American in a white cap and dark eye-glasses leaned over her. A pair of glasses with blue lenses were placed over her eyes and the light in the globe turned green. They examined her endlessly, each one in turn fingering the scar on her shoulder; they put a black tube against her

stomach and the tube buzzed. Then they unstrapped her and stood her in front of another box which looked like a great magic lantern, and turned off the light. After that an American with a shining metal plate on his forehead examined her eyes.

When the examination was over, all the Americans raised their masks, lit cigarettes and chattered among themselves. The tall pudgy-faced one repeated the word "keloid" several times. Sumiko slipped on her kimono, but an American in a trench cap and shorts came over and pulled it off and photographed her. When the bright light on the camera flashed, Sumiko again cried out and covered her face with her hands. The American moved his camera right up to her shoulder and the lamp flashed once more.

They led her over to a desk and an American in army uniform made her press her fingers on an inked pad and then on a sheet of paper. The prints of all ten fingers remained on the paper. Then an American hospital nurse, smoking a cigarette, tied a brass tag to Sumiko's arm stamped "SS-K 2279." After that she was taken back to the tent.

Sumiko did not go to the American tent any more. The nurse told her the American doctors had gone away to other places to select bomb victims for study. . . .

One night a young American soldier came into the tent. He had a woman's bright silk scarf wound around his neck and he swayed on his feet. He leered at a nurse and beckoned to her with his finger.

The nurse waved him away.

"Please go away, you're frightening the children," she said sternly.

The American complied and as he staggered off, they could hear him singing loudly:

*"Chong-king, chong-king,
Ching-chong, kina-kina,
Hiroshima, Nagasaki,
Boom!"*

The little girls sat up and listened. The drunken voice gradually receded. Presently the sound of aeroplanes came faintly from the distance, grew into a loud roar and faded away again. One after another the planes came over all night long until dawn.

5

She was sitting on her mat cutting birds out of newspaper when she heard whispering behind her back.

"Is that her?" someone asked hoarsely.

She turned round and saw a skinny little man with a wrinkled sun-burned face, wearing a soiled serge suit and straw sandals. He had a bundle over his arms and another tied to his neck.

"Sumiko?" He cried with a sob and dropped down on his heels. "So you're alive?"

"Uncle!" cried Sumiko and jumped up, then remembering herself, she sat down again, crossed her legs under her and bowed respectfully, laying her hands before her on the mat.

"I've searched for you everywhere. . . . No one could tell me where to find you. I thought I'd never find you. So here you are, alive. . . ."

He bowed to the nurse and the attendant.

"I am very grateful to you for all you have done for my niece."

"We knew you would come," said the attendant, bowing in her turn and smiling. "Sumi-chan had forgotten your address and that is why we could not let you know."

"At first I thought it was useless to look for her, but then I decided there was no harm in trying. I am all alone now too. My wife died long ago, my son was killed in Burma and my daughter was burned to death in Osaka in an air raid. That's why I decided to come. . . ." He stroked Sumiko's head gently. "So you recognize me? I came to see you before the war, remember? Your mother used to say you were a mischievous little thing. . . . Worse than a boy. Your mother. . . ."

He choked and blew his nose. Then he took a pipe and tobacco pouch from his belt, but put it back again at once.

Sumiko pulled down the neck of her robe and showed her uncle her shoulder.



"See, that's all. . . ."

Her uncle looked at the burn and shook his head. The nurse came over and whispered something in his ear. They went over to a corner of the tent and held a whispered conversation. The nurse went out.

A little girl next to Sumiko with a long scar on her forehead asked: "Is Sumi-chan going home?"

Sumiko did not reply. She finished cutting out her paper bird and handed it to the little girl, who thanked her.

"No one will ever come for me," she said.

"Yes, they will, they're looking for you already," said Sumiko, nodding her head in imitation of the nurse.

The nurse came back with the assistant doctor. This time he was without his white coat and mask.

"Can you take her at once?" he asked Sumiko's uncle.

The uncle bowed and murmured: "If I may. . . . That is what I came for. . . ."

"You may. In a few days all the patients here will be turned over to the American doctors and then you will not be able to take her."

The uncle said something to the assistant in a low voice.

"We believe that she is progressing very well," the assistant replied. "Of course it is difficult to say what might happen later on, but I advise you to take her. Is there a hospital where you live?"

"There is one in the town not far from our village."

"From time to time the burn will give her pain. If the pain becomes severe and if her temperature rises, you must consult a doctor immediately. Japanese doctors, not foreigners. But avoid mission hospitals."

The assistant smiled and nodded to Sumiko. She bowed to him, laying her hands on the mat.

"You will be given some clothes," said the assistant and went out with the nurse, who returned in a little while with a kimono, trousers and socks all smelling of carbolic.

"I can't find any suitable footwear," said the nurse. "We have wooden sandals but they are too small. This is a boy's kimono, but I think it will do."

"It is just the thing," said the uncle and laughed and rubbed his hands. "She always was a tomboy, my little niece."

When Sumiko had dressed, her uncle untied the bundle he carried around his neck and took out a small clay vase, wiped it and stood it on the barrel. Then he sat down on the straw and said gravely to Sumiko: "Sit down properly. I gathered these ashes in that street . . . let us pray."

He pressed the tips of his fingers together and bowed his head. Sumiko did the same. The nurse and the attendant also bent their heads.

Her uncle wrapped the vase in a piece of cloth and tied it to his belt. Sumiko gave all her paper birds to the other girls and said good-bye to the nurse and the attendant.

"You will all be taken home soon," said the uncle with a bow that included everyone.

As they were going down Hiji Hill which overlooked a vast brownish-grey desert of ruins, Sumiko pulled her uncle by the sleeve.

"Shall we go there? To the river side?"

"No, there is nothing there."

"And what about Minami-takeya quarter where the workshop was?"

Her uncle shook his head again, this time in silence. Sumiko untied the brass tag from her wrist and flung it away from her. It fell on a piece of broken tile with a loud clink.

"What is this?" asked her uncle, picking up the tag and examining it.

"They put it on my arm over there in hospital. . . ."

"Why didn't you return it to the doctor?"

"It wasn't the doctor who tied it on, it was those others . . . the Amis."

Her uncle wiped the tag on his sleeve.

"There's something written on it. Perhaps it is their talisman?" He took a slip of paper out of his pocket and wrapped the tag in it. "It shouldn't be thrown away. They may have a record of it somewhere. We must keep it—it may come in handy some time."

6

Two days later they boarded a train for Osaka, where they were to change for a train going to the north-eastern seacoast. Before pushing their way into the crowded carriage, Sumiko's uncle bought a small square bottle of some brownish liquid from an American soldier and drank it straight down. Sumiko pulled him gently by the sleeve, but he waved her away.

"Don't worry, your uncle is tough. He won't get drunk on foreign swill."

The compartment was packed. Her uncle asked a young woman in a black hood sitting on a sack between the benches to make room for Sumiko beside her on the floor. Sumiko's uncle noticed the neck of a clay vase protruding from a small bundle the woman held and he asked: "Did it happen on that day? Here?"

"No," replied the woman softly. "In Nagasaki."

"Your parents?"

"No, my two children." She hid the neck of the vase from sight.

Sumiko's uncle heaved a deep sigh of compassion and pointed to his niece.

"She was right in it. She was in the centre of the city when it exploded."

An elderly woman in a kimono with an embroidered crest hastily raised her handkerchief to her nostrils and asked anxiously: "Was she hurt?"

The uncle pointed to Sumiko's shoulder.

"She had a burn here. . . . Now there is only a scar. A thick scar. . . . It looks like a pickled plum and has the same colour."

"Atom bomb burns are called keloids," said a young man in a square students' cap who was sitting by the window.

A man in a military cap and hospital robe turned to Sumiko and gave her a searching look.

"Where were you when it happened?"

"At Sanjo bridge, not far from the spot where the bomb exploded," her uncle hastened to reply, raising his voice so that everyone could hear. "She was in the Mikawa quarter near the railway station. As soon as she saw the enemy plane drop something by parachute she ran down the street and jumped into a pit. She lay at the bottom of the pit praying."

Sumiko pulled her uncle by the sleeve.

"And the bomb exploded right over her," the uncle went on. "Houses and bridges and people went flying all round her . . . but she lay still, protected by the roof of a temple that had been blown all the way from the other end of town. All the others who happened to be in the Mikawa quarter at the time . . ." he made a hopeless gesture. "But this little girl didn't lose her head, she wasn't frightened at all."

"Wasn't frightened when the Picadon exploded?" The man in the hospital robe smiled. "Perhaps she had no time to be frightened?"

"I was terribly frightened," said Sumiko, frowning at her uncle. "Anyone would be."

"Anyhow it's a miracle she survived," remarked a woman with a baby, sitting on one of the benches. "She must have worn a talisman. . . ."

Her uncle was about to say something, but Sumiko pulled his sleeve.

"They say the planes came over from the direction of Korea. Is that true?" asked the woman in the kimono with the crest.

"No, they came from the north-east," said the student. "Three B-29s. They flew at an altitude of eight thousand metres. The plane that dropped the bomb was called Enola Gay."

"What does that mean? Is it the name of one of their towns?" asked an elderly woman.

"It is the Christian name and maiden name of the mother of the man who commanded the plane that dropped the Picadon," replied the student. "He decided to immortalize his mother."

"A respectful son," someone remarked from behind.

Everyone began talking about the Picadon, telling each other some of the numerous incredible stories that were being circulated about the bomb. It was said that the shadows of people who disintegrated at the moment of the explosion had remained imprinted on the walls of stone houses near Tokiwa bridge; that paper money reported to have been blown from the branch of the Osaka Bank in the centre of Hiroshima had rained down from the sky on a village near the Yamanote river; that two bullocks had fallen on to the roof of a school in Yaga district; that the ghosts of headless children in scorched rags walked by night in the Takashu district.

Sumiko, listening open-mouthed to these tales, pulled her uncle's sleeve. He turned a flushed face to her.

"What's the matter? I'm not saying anything. . . ."

"Why do they call it Picadon?"

"Pica means a great blinding flash and then," he threw up his hands, "Don! That was the explosion. Picadon!"

"They say the American doctors are making a serious study of the bomb victims," said a man in army uniform with a bandaged head. "They are especially interested in the effects on the blood. How is the little girl's blood?"

"The doctor said nothing about that," replied Sumiko's uncle. "She has only that burn and sometimes her eyes hurt her. . . ."

"That's from the rays," observed the student. "It's the result of radiation."

He went on to explain something in a low voice to the man in the hospital robe. Everyone quieted down to listen.

"Yes, they survived," the student was saying. "But radiation is a terrible thing. Professor Asano and Professor Watanabe believe that those

who suffered burns are liable to develop pernicious anaemia at any time . . . even ten years from now."

"Then they are all doomed," began the man in the hospital robe, but noticing that Sumiko was listening, he turned to the window and burst out laughing. "Now, look at those monks carrying those big sacks! They've been collecting alms most likely. What a sight that one looks in a pair of woman's trousers."

The elderly woman stared at Sumiko, shook her head and sighed. Then she took a few dried peaches out of her bag and handed them to the little girl.

"So you were treated by American doctors?" the woman in the black hood asked softly.

Sumiko shook her head violently.

"No, the Americans only pricked my arms and took pictures of me, and made blood tests . . . but they didn't give me any medicine. And they told the Japanese doctors not to give me any either."

Her uncle pulled her sleeve and she fell silent.

"They say you get a sudden haemorrhage from the nose or dark spots all over your body," said a man in a bowler hat and a cloak. "And then the fever sets in."

"Don't you think it's time to change the subject?" said the military man in a loud voice. He turned to the student and began talking about a professor who had treated his eyes.

It was very stuffy in the compartment during the night. Sumiko slept fitfully, kept awake by the itching in her shoulder. Early in the morning she was awakened by her uncle. He was examining her with an anxious face.

"Turn to the light," he said. She complied and he scrutinized her neck.

"Two red spots . . . they weren't there yesterday. Do they hurt?"

Sumiko touched her neck.

"No, but they itch. . . . Must be mosquito bites."

The woman in the hood also examined Sumiko's neck and nodded.

"I was bitten too during the night. Fleas most likely."

"Oh fleas, that's all right." Her uncle moistened his finger with his saliva, ran it over the sooty window pane and dabbed it on the spots. "We'll mark them . . . so as not to confuse them with any other spots that might appear later on. . . ."

"But don't touch my face," Sumiko wailed. "It wouldn't be nice."

Everyone laughed.

The train entered a tunnel and slowed down to a crawl. When it emerged on the other side it stopped. An aeroplane dived out from behind a hill and began to circle over a pagoda that was visible among the pine trees on the hillside. Near the tail of the plane there was a dark circle with a white star and white strips on either side. Sumiko screamed and hid her face in her hands.

"Don't touch your neck, you'll rub off the marks," shouted her uncle and slapped her on the back. "Don't be afraid, they won't drop any more bombs. The war is over."

"Yes, the war is over . . . no more bombs," said the man in the hospital robe. "Enough. No more Picadons either. No more!"

SEVEN AND A HALF YEARS LATER

1

They walked along a mountain path which wound among boulders and bushes of wild azaleas and clover now bare of flowers. Sumiko walked ahead, jumping nimbly from stone to stone. Now and again she glanced back and waved her hand impatiently.

"Yae-chan crawls like a snail."



The road had grown steadily narrower and now it was a mere foot-path running along the edge of a precipice. Looking down they could see only the tips of cypresses and Japanese cedars through the thick mist that enveloped the valley.

The ground was damp and the snow still clung to the crevices. Sumiko had chosen the shortest road from the New Village to the Old, across Chestnut Hill, a path used only by charcoal-burners and wood-cutters who were not afraid of steep rocky slopes, crevices and gorges.

As the two girls passed under a jagged rock overgrown with reddish moss, Yae-ko whispered:

"There's a cave on the other side of this rock. They say if you go to the entrance and shout: 'Greetings, Hanzaemon-san!' an old badger will answer: 'Greetings,' and address you by name. And he never makes a mistake. And then you hear the sound of singing and the music of samisens and flutes, played by the young badgers whom Hanzaemon holds in thrall."

"Hanzaemon-san only knows folk who were born in these parts," said Sumiko. "I'm sure he won't know anyone like me who comes from far away."

"And in that glade over there," Yaeko went on, pointing to a dilapidated little cabin made of brushwood standing under a spreading oak, "a film actor from Tokyo killed himself with a shotgun. . . . That was during the war. They say he still walks there and weeps."

"It must be eerie here at night," said Sumiko with a shudder. "I would die of fright if I had to come this way in the dark."

"There's an incantation against werewolves and ghosts," said Yaeko. "See." She bunched the fingers of her left hand and covered them with her right palm. "My grandfather told me that the samurai used to protect themselves from all sorts of harm by making this sign and saying: 'Marishiten monjubosatsu.'"

"And did it help?"

"They say it did."

By now they had reached the bridge. It was sort of cat's-walk consisting of two pairs of ropes, one above the other. Planks were laid on the lower pair, while the upper ones served as handrails. Yaeko took off her sandals and thrust them into her kimono, then she licked a finger and moistened her eyebrows and, seizing hold of the ropes, set out gingerly over the bridge which swayed at every step. When she reached the other side, she hailed her friend.

"Don't look down!" she warned, "or else . . ." and she waved a finger in front of her eyes.

Sumiko crossed the bridge and dropped down on to the moss with a groan.

"Oh, how awful! If I hadn't kept repeating the incantation all the time, I'd have fallen down for sure."

Yaeko laughed.

"See, it helps. It drives away harm."

She went over to the edge of the precipice.

"Look," she said, pointing to the view spread out before them. "You can see everything from here. That's a fishing village over there. And there's the river winding like a snake through the valley and out to sea. To the right is the artillery range. See what a clear view you have of it from here! Those little round houses which look like tops upside down are the barracks. See, there's the American flag flying from the mast, and farther on you can see the landing strips and the aeroplanes."

Sumiko screwed up her eyes.

"I can't see very well. My eyes are troubling me again like last year. This time, it must be. . . ."

Yaeko quickly interrupted her: "Don't talk nonsense, it's not that at all. It's because you insist on sewing by lamplight."

Sumiko went over to the mountainside and looked down.

"Look, there's a plum tree growing right out of the rock! It will soon be flowering."

The sun was sinking to rest behind Monastery Hill. The patches of snow on the peaks of the distant mountains turned orange and dark blue in the folds. The wind from the valley down below carried the throb of a festive drum.

"It will be dark soon. We've got to hurry," said Yaeko. "They have probably begun already."

The path wound steeply down the mountainside. Here and there it was so slippery that they had to hold on to the branches of trees and

juniper bushes to keep from falling. Before long they had reached the highway.

At a bend in the road they came upon a man wearing a knitted cap and a cloak. With him were two girls of about ten carrying bundles. When he came up to Sumiko the man stopped and greeted her with a pleasant smile which showed his gold teeth.

The little girls with him also stopped, but he motioned to them to go on. He looked Sumiko over with an appraising eye and a fixed smile.

Sumiko wanted to go after Yaeko but the man stopped her with a gesture and his smile broadened.

"You came here soon after the war, I believe?" he said. "Dear me, how you have grown! Now, how would you like to go and live in town? You will wear European clothes and you will have money to put away every month. You can live very comfortably. See, these advertisements I have here. . . ."

He pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and unfolded it, but Sumiko sprang aside and ran after her friend.

"Don't turn round!" hissed Yaeko, seizing her friend by the arm.

"He knows all about me."

"That Santa, the Badger, knows everything. He goes about the villages picking up girls to sell. And they all become panpan-girls who go about with the Amis. Don't turn round whatever you do!"

It was getting quite dark. Through the cypress grove, where the shrine of Inari stood, they could see lights flickering and heard the beating of a hand drum. They quickened their steps.

A road sign with the word "SLOW" in gleaming yellow letters appeared ahead where the road was hemmed in between huge boulders on either side.

A coloured poster sticking to a large flat stone near by caught their eye: children playing and three aeroplanes in the sky overhead, one of them bearing the word "ENOLA." In a corner was an inscription in Japanese: "Fight the war danger! Peace at home. Amis begone!"

"Enola," read Yaeko. "That's the plane that dropped the Picadon."

"Katsu Gengo," Sumiko read the signature in the corner of the drawing. "That must be a famous artist . . . but the children aren't very good. They look more like tadpoles. I could do better myself."

"Come. We must hurry," said Yaeko.

2

A crowd of children and women with babies on their backs was gathered outside the school, which was decorated with paper lanterns and sprigs of holly. A group of young men with their kimonos slipped off their shoulders and the skirts tucked under their belts stood around lorries, talking in loud voices, laughing and slapping their tattooed arms. They filed up to a vat of rice beer standing by the wrestling ring and drank in turn from a wooden ladle.

Yaeko nudged Sumiko. "That funny chap is here too."

Over by the swings in one corner of the field stood a round-shouldered young man wearing a cap with a long peak and a coat thrown over his shoulders. A pair of dark spectacles covered his eyes.

"He's a queer one!" Yaeko giggled. "Came here after New Year and has been here nearly a month but he hasn't spoken a word to anyone. I thought he was blind at first."

"The other day he came over to our gate and stood for a long time smoking," said Sumiko. "Uncle asked me why this Takami-san hangs around our house so often."

Yaeko laughed. "Sumi-chan's uncle doesn't drive him away. He's a cousin of landlord Sakuma's wife. He must have heard that Sumi-chan was also hurt by the Picadon and he wants to get acquainted."

"Uncle said that Takami-san lay in hospital in Nagasaki for a long time after the Picadon."

"He isn't quite right in his head," said Yaeko with a stern look at her friend. "You mustn't talk to him."

From the open windows of the school came the voice of someone chanting: "Devils begone! Good luck to the home!"

On the steps of the school building appeared a stout wrestler with his hair done up in a knot on the top. He carried a wooden tray with a casket on which was inscribed the character which stands for "luck." Behind him came a group of little boys and girls with heavily powdered faces, pencilled eyebrows and black spots painted on their foreheads. The word "luck" was inscribed on their coloured paper caps and the little caskets attached to their necks.

The young men gathered around the lorries quieted down and amid complete silence the stout wrestler pronounced the words: "Devils begone! Good luck to the home!" And with an awkward gesture he threw a handful of roasted peas into the crowd. There was a rush to pick up the "grains of luck." The wrestler waddled over to a waiting car and drove off in the direction of the pine grove where the shrine stood. The young men climbed into the lorries and followed him. As they drove off one of them shouted to the crowd: "Come to Inari Shrine. There will be a moving picture show, an American picture, with tightrope walking and other entertainment afterwards!"

The children and the women moved off after the lorries. Takami also wandered off in the same direction.

"I'm not going," Yaeko said. She sat down on the school steps and rubbed her feet. "I've changed my mind."

"Is Kan-chan coming here?" asked Sumiko, but her friend did not reply.

The street in front of the school was empty now. Ootoyo, the skinny old school janitress, came out carrying a long pole with which she proceeded to remove the paper lanterns.

"Why didn't you two go along?" she asked the girls. "You ought to go and enjoy yourselves today."

Ootoyo's breath smelt of rice beer.

"We're too tired," said Sumiko with a sigh. "Besides, we're too old for that sort of thing."

"Today is a holiday, you ought to enjoy yourselves," repeated Ootoyo. "How many roasted peas did you eat today?"

Sumiko smiled and wrinkled her nose. "How many did Aunt Ootoyo eat? Thirty?"

"I ate thirty when I was thirty years old," said Ootoyo. She swayed on her feet and put out a hand to steady herself. "But today I must eat more...."

"And so instead of eating peas auntie had a little drink, eh?"

"Yes, I did have a drop," Ootoy wiped her mouth with her sleeve. "Landlord Sakuma invited me over to the estate and I told all their fortunes. And they gave me a drink because I predicted good fortune for them all. But they don't make good rice beer nowadays. Before the war it tasted much better, now all the good rice gets shipped out somewhere."

"What did you tell their fortunes with?"

"Peas. And if I wasn't drunk I'd tell yours too. But some other time. . . ."

Sumiko felt inside her belt and pulled out a few peas and handed them to Ootoy.

"How many have you eaten today?" Ootoy asked her.

"I ought to eat seventeen. . . ." Sumiko said pensively. "But I didn't eat any. I'm going to die soon anyway."

"Don't talk nonsense," Yaeko admonished her sharply.

Ootoy gathered up her lanterns and went away.

"Let's go home," said Yaeko in a flat voice.

"Perhaps Kan-chan went over there?" Sumiko said, pointing to the pine grove. "Has it started already?"

Yaeko shook her head. "No, he must be busy if he didn't come. Let's go home, but we'll take a different road this time."

3

They had passed the knoll on which rose the white brick façade of the Yugeh mansion, when they saw a light flickering over by the bridge near the bamboo thicket. Yaeko seized Sumiko's arm.

"Americans. Let's turn back."

"No," said Sumiko, tossing her head. "We'll slip past them quickly."

"They'll grab hold of us and drag us into the thicket. . . . Let's go back."

Two lights flickered by the bridge.

"No, that's not Americans," said Sumiko. "They would stand in the dark. Come on."

They picked up a handful of pebbles and hid them in their sleeves.

"We can always run away if they start anything. Come on."

Yaeko took off her sandals. Sumiko did likewise. When they reached the bridge they stopped. The light moved towards them. They heard the snapping of twigs.

"Let's run!" whispered Sumiko.

She was about to hurl a stone in the direction of the light when Yaeko stopped her.

"Wait. It's a paper lantern. Can't be Americans. They use electric torches."

A man came up to them and raised his lantern over his head. Another man, tall and slightly lame, approached.

"Yae! Going home?" he asked.

Yaeko did not answer. She threw her sandals on to the ground, slipped them on her feet and, turning her face away, said coldly: "I thought Kanji-san was going to that place?"

Kanji went over to her and whispered something in her ear and they moved away. At first Yaeko talked with her back to Kanji, but presently she turned round to face him. The young man with the lantern remained standing next to Sumiko. His thick eyebrows were raised in surprise. He lowered his lantern so that the light fell on her face. She shot an indignant glance at him and their eyes met. He turned away and Sumiko, with a toss of her head, walked over to the bridge. A man in a cap and with a knapsack on his back was tinkering with a bicycle that was propped up against the bridge railings, while another young cyclist wearing a student's cap held lighted matches for him. Two other young men were standing beside their bicycles, smoking. They all followed Sumiko silently with their eyes as she passed.

Sumiko turned round at the sound of hurried footsteps behind her. Yaeko ran up panting and said gaily: "Kan-chan had something urgent to do and that is why he didn't come."

"Who were the others with the bicycles?"

Yaeko did not answer at once. "They've come from far away. One of their bicycles broke down," she said evasively.

"I suppose they're collecting signatures. Like last year."

Yaeko stopped and peered into the darkness.

"Let's slow down. Look, Sumi-chan, you run faster than me. As soon as I nudge you, run right back to the bridge and whistle."

"Why, what's happened?"

Yaeko continued to stare into the darkness.

"Remember Yukio-san from the Youth League? He came here before New Year to collect money in aid of the Hokkaido strikers."

"You mean the one who gave out little booklets and played the accordion? A lively chap. . . ."

"That's the one. Well, the police caught him today near East Village. This place will be very carefully watched from now on because the Amis are going to build a regular military base here. They're going to call it 'Enola.'"

"Like that aeroplane?"

"Hush." Yaeko pricked up her ears. "Now remember, dash off as soon as I nudge you."



In silence they reached the point where the path joined the highway. Opposite a smooth round rock the stone statue of the Bodisatwa Jizo loomed in the darkness under its tall oak tree. Yaeko went out on to the road and cast a rapid look in either direction. Then she put two fingers in her mouth and emitted a shrill whistle.

Sumiko went over to the statue and bowed.

"Look," she called to her friend, "something was pasted on to the base. One of those drawings by that . . . what's his name . . . Katsu Gengo, most likely."

Yaeko laughed softly.

"That young man with the lantern couldn't take his eyes off Sumi-chan. . . . Held his lantern up like this and simply stared at her. . . ."

Sumiko giggled.

"Perhaps he's crazy too, like Takami-san. Such a mop of hair too. . . ."

"His name is Ryukichi. He works in a charcoal burners' co-operative on Chestnut Hill. He's a friend of Kan-chan's; they worked together the year before last in a stone quarry and after that Kan-chan went to work in the woods on Tunnel Mountain and Ryu-chan got a job in the co-operative." Yaeko went over to her friend and gave her a playful nudge in the shoulder. "Ryu-chan stared at Sumi-chan so hard his eyes nearly popped out, as if a fox had bewitched him."

"Hush, you silly!"

Sumiko pushed her away. A pebble fell out of her sleeve. She picked it up, pulled out the others and threw them into a ditch, calling after them: "Devils begone! Good luck to my home!"

A faint pattering as of running feet sounded from the darkness below, and Yaeko, in imitation of her friend, called:

"Amis begone! Peace to our home!"



4

Sumiko blew through the bamboo pipe as hard as she could but the kindling she had gathered in the valley was still damp and refused to burn. Finally she had to take the kettle off the stove and hang her pot on the hook over the fire pit.

There was a sudden uproar outside where the children were playing and one of them set up a howl. Sumiko ran over to the window and moved aside the shutter. She saw several urchins engaged in a tussle beside the ditch near the rice field, fighting for possession of some tiny fish they had caught in the slime at the bottom of the ditch.

"Stop it!" she cried. She ran to the door, but neither her sandals nor her straw shoes were standing in their usual place by the door. Only her uncle's shoes were there. She looked into the kindling basket and into the charcoal box, stuck her hand behind the pickle barrel and in the niche under the mattresses, and looked under the little altar-shelf. She even looked into the canvas sack and into the empty kerosene can that hung from the rafter. But there was no sign of either her sandals or her shoes.

The corn mush in the pot heated up slowly. Sumiko poked up the coals and glanced out of the window. The boys had stopped fighting and were squatting beside the ditch that ran along the edge of neighbour Kuhei's field. They were in a hurry, for Kuhei, who was hoeing in the field, had reached the middle of his plot and might discover them any minute.

The yellow blossoms of the colza nodded on the boundary strips between the plots. Preparations for ploughing were in full swing on all the

plots, which were laid out in terraces on the slope of the hill. Spring had come early this year. The villagers were busy repairing the bamboo conduit, cleaning out the pipe and changing the supports. Several women were working beside the large barrel from which the water stored in the large pool at landlord Sakuma's estate flowed through the bamboo pipes to the tenants' fields. The water was pumped into the pool from a reservoir down in the valley.

Sumiko saw her uncle standing on a ladder propped up against the adobe barn in the yard of the Sakuma house. They were changing the pine bark on the roof of the barn. Jinjaku's daughter, Harue, came out of their hut, carrying water tubs on a yoke and went down towards the creek. Sumiko saw a man in a khaki shirt and army breeches tied with straw at the ankles come out of the mulberry grove, carrying a basket on his back. He walked with an easy, swinging gait, holding the basket with one hand. A sprig of plum blossoms peeped out of the basket. As he neared the house he slowed down, straightened his tousled hair and wiped his face with his sleeve. Sumiko saw him look over toward her house.

She moved away from the window and patted her hair, shaking off bits of straw. When the young man was quite close, she pulled the shutter to. The newspaper that was pasted to the window frame was patched in several spots with neat little strips of paper. But in the lower corner one tiny hole had been left open. If you sat down by the window and pressed your face to it, the hole was exactly on a level with your eye.

She saw him walk slowly, very slowly past the fence. Then he turned and knitted his dark eyebrows, took a few more steps and disappeared—for through the hole she could see only from the end of the fence to the persimmon tree by the gate. But she had had a good view of him this time. That night he had stared at her in the lantern light she had noticed little more than that he was wearing a black jersey. Now she judged him to be twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. He was a little younger than Kanji. That basket he was carrying must have been full of charcoal. Yaeko had said his name was Ryukichi and that he was a charcoal-burner. But what was that sprig of plum blossoms doing in his basket?

Sumiko moved away from the window, sat down on the threshold and, throwing the end of the length of rope she had been working on over her shoulder, began to weave straws into the other end which she held tightly pressed between her feet.

Presently she heard footsteps outside the window. A shadow flitted across the window, and a husky voice inquired. "Could you tell me where Akagi, the school-teacher lives?"

"Go to the right by the hill and it is the third house on the right-hand side," Sumiko replied.

But there was no sound of receding footsteps, nothing but a faint rustle over by the fence. Sumiko went on working. When her supply of straws ended, she spread some more straw on the floor by the threshold and sat down by the window with her eye at the peep-hole. She saw Ryukichi leaning against the fence, leaning through a booklet which he held on a handkerchief spread out on his hand. Sumiko moved the shutter aside a chink and glanced in the direction of the barn. Her uncle was still sitting on the ladder with his back to her.

Ryukichi's lips moved as he read and his eyebrows were closely knit. Moistening a finger he turned a page. As he did so several sheets of paper

fell out of the book. He managed to catch two of them, the rest fell on the ground. One of them floated down inside the fence and fell beside the rain-water barrel.

At that moment Sumiko's uncle climbed up the ladder to the roof of the barn. At any moment he might turn their way. Sumiko's hand flew to her neck and in her agitation she began pinching herself. Ryukichi slipped the basket off his back, leaned over the fence and reached out for the piece of paper, but it was too far. Then he squatted on his heels, found an opening in the fence and stuck his hand through just as Sumiko's uncle started climbing down the ladder.

"Go away!" Sumiko whispered through her peep-hole. "Somebody is coming!"

Ryukichi stood up with a sheepish look on his face.

"I can't reach it. Please burn that piece of paper. I beg you."

He stuffed the booklet wrapped in his handkerchief into his pocket and strode off. Sumiko closed the shutter, ran quickly over to the fence, crouching as low as she could, and snatched up the slip of paper. Then she darted back into the house, hid the paper under the heap of rope she had been weaving, pulled it out again and ran over to the little altar and opened the bottom drawer. Behind a little packet of medicinal herbs and plasters at the back of the drawer lay a tiny package of amulets. From under it peeped the toe of her sandal with the red pleated laces. The other sandal was not to be seen. Just then footsteps sounded outside and Sumiko had barely time to shut the little drawer and hide the slip of paper in the bosom of her kimono.

5

Her uncle took off his rubber-soled canvas boots and threw them down by the door. Then he pulled off the white cotton scarf and wiped his face with it.

"Who were you talking to just now? Who was that standing by the window?" he demanded, looking very stern. Sumiko returned his angry gaze steadily.

"The window was closed," she said calmly.

He glanced at the window, then at Sumiko and snorted.

"Take care, you must not talk to strangers. If anyone tries to call you to some meeting or some such nonsense, don't you dare to go. Last year the ring-leaders of that youth organization, or whatever it's called, were arrested in the Old Village for holding meetings, collecting signatures, distributing leaflets and such like. They all got what they asked for. Two of them died, I hear."

"Executed?"

"No, they were handed over to the Americans, and they died before the trial."

Sumiko placed the pot with the corn mush, a bowl and chopsticks before her uncle. When he had finished eating, he pulled his pipe out of his belt and lit it.

"Once you get into the hands of those American gendarmes—Empees, they call them—you're done for." He knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "So mind you don't go anywhere without my permission. Anything can happen nowadays."

He stretched out on his mat, groaned and sat up again, his face twisted with pain. Sumiko went over and sat down beside him and proceeded to massage his shoulders with the tips of her fingers and the side of her hand. Her uncle grunted with pleasure. As she was rubbing his back she felt some long, flat object under his kimono.

"I don't know where my sandals have got to," she murmured. "Can't find my shoes either."

He coughed.

"I can't let you go out without my permission. You'll get into trouble."

He lay down on the mat and closed his eyes. Sumiko washed the clay off the soles of his canvas boots, gathered up the straw she had laid out to dry on the floor and sat down to work again. As soon as her uncle began to snore she turned her back to him, pulled out the slip of paper and spread it out carefully. Before starting to read it, she patted her hair and glanced into the mirror.

She had difficulty in deciphering the characters; they were scrawled hastily in pencil and all slanted to one side. "Notify the teacher: 1) Information for Katsu Gengo collected. 2) Grandfather will come on Friday. 3) All's well on sector No. 2," she read.

Sumiko pouted in disappointment. It wasn't a letter at all. She folded the slip of paper and thrust it back into her kimono.

Late that afternoon Yaeko's father and Harue's father came to visit her uncle. When they had left, Yaeko came. Sumiko told her all about Ryukichi's passing the fence and dropping a note. Yaeko looked wise.

"He dropped it on purpose. Has Sumi-chan read it?"

Sumiko pulled out the note and handed it to her friend without a word. Yaeko read it and she too pursed her lips.

"I thought Ryu-chan had written Sumi-chan a letter."

"As if I would waste time picking up his letters!" said Sumiko with an indignant toss of her head.

"The teacher must be told."

"Uncle said I mustn't leave the house. He's taken away my sandals."

"Very well, I'll go to the teacher myself."

Yaeko hid the paper in her sleeve and went out, promising to come back later.

Sumiko glanced out of the window. She saw Yaeko stop by the gate and point to a sprig of plum blossom that had been thrust into the fence.

"Did Sumi-chan do that?"

Sumiko glanced at the fence, blushed and shook her head.

"I wonder where it came from," said Yaeko. "All the plum blossoms down here have faded, and up in the hills it hasn't bloomed yet."

Harue came up with a white kerchief on her head, a little sleeveless jacket and a bright red apron over her black trousers; she looked as neat and attractive as always.

"Has Haru-chan been to town?" Yaeko asked her.

Harue's cheeks dimpled.

"I went for medicine. On the way some Amis working near the round rock called me over and gave me some sweets. They called me 'cutie,' and other silly things. I took the sweets and ran away."

Yaeko shook her head in disapproval. Harue whispered something in Yaeko's ear and giggled. The two walked off slowly down the street.

"Be sure to come back," Sumiko called after her friend. "I'll be waiting for you."

6

She settled herself more comfortably by the window. It was rapidly turning dark, but she did not light the lamp. From the distance came the loud croaking of frogs. A yellow light, the electric lamp over the gate of the Sakuma estate, glowed through the trees. She could hear the measured hum of the rope-making machine on the Sakuma estate. She put on her uncle's sandals, crept over to the fence and sniffed at the sprig of plum blossom. Then she went back into the house and sat down by the window again.

Suddenly a bowed figure appeared by the fence. It was Takami in a kimono and cap, but without his dark glasses. He had come up so quietly she had not heard him. He came over to the window.

"I have wanted to talk to you for some time," he began in a muffled voice that sounded as if he were talking from behind a mask. "I daresay you have heard about me." He bent closer. "I have heard about you. . . . Tell me, do you see anything white in your dreams? Snow, or white swans, or white clouds, perhaps?"

Sumiko shook her head and moved away from the window.

"I do." Takami drew a cigar out of his sleeve and flicked his lighter. "Please do not think I am mad, although I do speak strangely perhaps. But you must not be afraid of me. I am very much upset today. I have just learned that a girl who lived in Nagasaki at that time, not far from the Medical Institute, and who like myself also escaped by a miracle. . . . died last month. All these years she had been quite all right, except for anaemia. And suddenly her temperature went up and she began to rave about ice mountains and white lilies and in a few days she was dead."

"Did she have any burn scars?" Sumiko asked, pulling her chair closer to the window.

"She had a keloid on her breast. It was shaped like a small butterfly. In fact in the Nagasaki hospital they called her Miss Butterfly. And now. . . I too have begun to have white dreams. That is a warning of the inevitable."

"Have you been to the doctor?"

A faint smile flitted over Takami's lean, handsome face.

"It is useless. Our doctors do not know how to treat such cases yet. . . . The American doctors have all the data. They have made a study of a great many cases in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; they took all the case histories from the Japanese doctors and sent them to America and declared all data on atomic fever to be secret. And we survivors are all doomed to die, like that Miss Butterfly."

"Did she get any treatment?"

"No." Takami waved his hand. "She too felt it was no use. She was advised to have blood transfusions, and some other sort of cure, but she did nothing. Besides, she had no money. Blood is very expensive."

"Many people are still alive and working as usual," said Sumiko. "Perhaps that girl died from some other cause?"

Takami closed his eyes and shook his head.

"She died because she bore the brand of the Picadon. In that moment when the bomb flashed our fate was sealed. Some were killed outright,

others were given a brief reprieve." He looked at Sumiko and raised his hand with the cigar that had gone out. "In that moment when the bomb flashed, everything inside of us burned out, leaving only the shell. For instance, if I were to smoke this cigar without flicking off the ash it would burn to the end. The shape would remain. But only the shape—the cigar itself would be no longer there—nothing but ashes. The same thing has happened to us. We have died long since . . . you and I. We only appear to be alive, but actually we are like dolls made of ashes. . . . Do you pray? You don't? Well, you need not. There are no gods, and no heaven, only space filled with four- and six-engined flying machines of death. There is only one god, and its name is Picadon. Picadon-daimyoin. Good night."

He flung away his cigar, bowed his head and moved away from the window. Sumiko closed the shutter, and sat for a long time with her face pressed to the wall. The itch in her shoulder grew more intense, gradually turning to a dull ache. She began pinching her neck.

GIVE YOUR BLOOD

I

Early in the morning they were awakened by a loud commotion: the barking of dogs, the roar of motorcycles, the hooting of cars, the sound of running feet and the shouts of women and children.

Sumiko's uncle rushed to the window and pulled so hard at the shutter that he tore it off the hinge. A policeman sped past on a motorcycle, and behind him came a dark brown automobile shaped like a coffer. Women with dishevelled hair were running down the street.

"They've come to collect rice tax arrears," muttered her uncle and clucked his tongue. "That makes the third time since the beginning of autumn. . . ."

The next moment he was nearly knocked off his feet by Kuhei's wife who came rushing in carrying a sack over her shoulder. She plumped down on the earthen floor, laid the sack down in front of her and with tears in her eyes begged Sumiko's uncle to hide it for her—it was their last bag of rice. Her house would be searched any minute now and if they found the sack the family would starve.

She bowed down to the ground: "Kuni-san, I implore you, do as I ask! They will not search your house!"

Sumiko's uncle looked at the sack out of the corner of his eye and grunted.

"Last spring when I still had a plot of land and they came for my grain, Kuhei refused to hide my sacks."

The broad face of Kuhei's wife puckered up and she broke into a loud weeping, bowing rapidly all the time. Sumiko picked up the sack and dragged it to a corner of the room where the ropes were piled. Her uncle shouted angrily at her but he did not try to stop her.

Just then a band started to play outside. The music came nearer and nearer, then suddenly stopped, and a woman's voice was heard saying:

"The Red Cross Aid Society and the Women's Charity Association call upon everyone in the name of humanity and mercy to come to the aid of the wounded soldiers of the United Nations army which is fighting a

holy war in Korea to uphold the principles of humanity and civilization." The roar of police motorcycles drowned out the voice for a moment.

"We ask all the villagers to contribute their share to this noble cause."

Sumiko moved the shutter aside. A red car with a megaphone on the roof was moving slowly past the house. It was heading for the open space in front of the Sakuma estate where several other cars stood surrounded by a small crowd. Several people in white coats climbed out of the Red Cross ambulance.

"They haven't come to collect rice at all," Kuhei's wife muttered behind Sumiko's back. "What's happened?" she called to an old woman passing by.

The woman pointed over to the square. "Some rich folk from the city . . ." she said.

Kuhei's wife snatched up her sack, threw it over her shoulder and bowed to Sumiko's uncle.

"Excuse me, Kuni-san, for troubling you . . . for nothing."

She hurried out. Sumiko's uncle went to see what the commotion was about. Presently he returned accompanied by an elderly woman with a heavily powdered face, wearing a modish red hat, red coat, green shoes. As they came in the woman was saying:

" . . . first of all we must ascertain what blood group she belongs to. Has she had a blood test since she came here?"

Sumiko's uncle went over to the little altar-shelf, took out the small bundle with the amulets from the lower drawer and found the tag Sumiko had been given by the American doctors in Hiroshima. The woman examined the tag closely and her long powdered nose twitched as if she were smelling it.

"She must consult a doctor without fail. Otherwise she can fall ill at any time. . . . You must take her to the American army headquarters in town. They have a medical division there. . . ."

Sumiko shook her head.

"I shan't go to the Amis," she said. "I'm afraid of them."

The woman smiled, pursed her lips reprovingly and nodded.

"But you must see a doctor. Go to a Japanese doctor if you don't want to consult the Americans."

She took a little book and a fountain pen out of her red leather purse, tore out a slip of paper, wrote something on it and handed it to Sumiko's uncle.

"Take her to Doctor Arimitsu. Here is his address. I shall tell him about her and he will examine her and give her medicine free of charge. After that I shall help her to find some work." Her eyes slid over the smoke-blackened ceiling and the worn floor mats and she lifted a dainty handkerchief to her nose. "Life is very hard these days."

Sumiko's uncle nodded.

"Last year I had to give up the little plot I rented. And now I try to make a living by doing all sorts of jobs." He rubbed his neck and laughed sheepishly. "It's rather hard."

The woman examined Sumiko with a critical eye. Then she pressed her lips together in a smile.

"The girl will be better off working in town. She can get a situation in a respectable house, with some foreign family, for example. Our Children's Aid Society will give her the references she needs." The woman

turned to Sumiko's uncle. "After you have taken her to see Dr. Arimitsu bring her to me."

She went out, her high heels clicking. Sumiko's uncle saw her to the gate.

The round, moonlike face of Ineko appeared over the fence from the neighbouring yard.

"She came to our house too, that one . . ." Ineko rattled, pouting her lips and screwing up her eyes in imitation of the powdered lady. "They're going from house to house asking for blood donors. Everybody's gone over to the common. My mother wouldn't let me go. . . . Last night I went to Yae-chan and we went somewhere together. . . ." She blinked rapidly. "I came home very late and I got an awful scolding."

They heard the voice of Sumiko's uncle on the other side of the fence and Ineko disappeared. Sumiko heard her uncle tell Ineko's mother that the Red Cross people from town had appealed for blood donors but nobody had responded. Then a fat woman with a yellow feather in her hat had announced that the blood would be paid for. All they wanted this time were a few drops of blood for a test, and within a few days they would come back and buy blood from those whose tests had been favourable. One or two villagers had given their blood for a test.

"I'm not going to any doctor," Sumiko said when her uncle came in. "I'm afraid."

"You'll have to go to that Doctor Arimitsu. The lady promises he'll examine you free of charge. We shall go together. But we won't go to that lady, she has a cunning face."

Sumiko smiled.

He took the slip of paper the woman had given him out of his belt. "Here's the address of Arimitsu's clinic." He went over to the altar and put the brass tag back in its drawer.

2

There was no more brushwood in the valley on the south side of Chestnut Hill. People from all three villages in the region had always come there to gather wood, but now a few rotting twigs was all they could dig up in



the sandy soil. The woods on Chestnut Hill were taboo; they belonged to the landlord Sakuma. The only source of firewood in the neighbourhood was the forest behind the school building. Once upon a time monkeys had lived there and it was still known as Monkey Forest. Until the previous year it had belonged to the state and hence was open to the general public, but had since been purchased by a contractor who had put a fence up around his property. Since it was not guarded, however, the villagers continued to go there for their firewood.

Sumiko walked slowly behind her uncle. Her uncle carried his bundle of brushwood on his back, Sumiko balanced hers on her head. When they reached the Sakuma estate, her uncle said he had to drop in there for a while and told Sumiko to go straight home.

At the edge of the field belonging to Ineko's father sat Takami surrounded by a group of children. He was making pipes for them out of reeds with a penknife.

"You're not holding it right," he said to one little boy who was trying to blow a newly-made pipe. He took it from the boy and put it to his lips. "Sec? That's the way. You have to hold it sideways."

He played a little tune and gave the pipe back to the boy. Then he got up and went after Sumiko.

"Forgive me for talking like that last time. Were you angry with me?"

"No. . . ." Sumiko looked after her uncle and saw him pass through the gates of the Sakuma estate without turning round. "I see you have quite a way with children."

Takami laughed softly.

"They used to tease me terribly and throw stones at me at first. They thought I was mad. But now we are good friends. I am happiest of all when I am with them. My favourite poet Ishikawa Takuboku once wrote that whenever he felt sad he would go down to the seashore and play with the little crabs. So I amuse myself by making pipes for these little crabs."

They reached Sumiko's gate.

"Are you studying anywhere?" she asked, turning her face away.

"I am studying law at the Kyoto University," he replied. Then he laughed. "But what sense is there in studying law? It has no meaning nowadays. And why learn anything when we have all become savages again. One fashionable French writer said of Hiroshima: 'Machine civilization has now entered the final stage of barbarism.' In a single second the Picadon did more to enlighten me than if I had read a hundred thousand books on philosophy. The Picadon gave me the answer to that question: 'Is life worth living?' Something happened that morning far more terrible than the death of thousands of people. That morning the conscience of humanity turned to ashes. It lost its right to exist."

A little girl with festering eyes ran up to him and pulled him by the sleeve.

"Make one for me too, please."

"Very well, I'll make you one. Run along." He stroked the little girl's hair. "People invented the Picadon, they must answer for it."

"It was the Americans who dropped the Picadon," said Sumiko.

"It doesn't matter who dropped it, Americans or Portuguese. What matters is that it was human beings that made it, and not any of the other creatures that inhabit the earth. Humanity is to blame. The thought makes one burn with shame for mankind. That is why. . . ."

"They won't drop any more bombs," Sumiko interrupted him.

"Yes, they will," he said. "The explosion over Hiroshima started a chain reaction that will have no end. One explosion will lead to another. Picadons will repeat themselves again and again like earthquakes and typhoons. The future of mankind is one huge radio-active cloud. And in that cloud our accursed planet will disappear."

Sighing, he took a half-smoked cigar out of his pocket and thrust it into his mouth. Sumiko opened the gate and bowed to him. He laid his hand on the gate.

"I'm sorry, I have upset you again with my talk. . . . You see, I can't talk to anyone else about these things. No one else here experienced what we did. You and I understand each other. We share the same fate, we are both doomed to die and we have to make the best of it. . . ."

"I don't want to die," Sumiko whispered.

Takami shook his head.

"To live only to cure oneself is like blowing up a punctured football. We carry the brand of the Picadon. . . ."

Without waiting for him to finish, Sumiko bowed and went quickly into her yard. A little girl ran whimpering up to Takami and handed him a bamboo stick. He turned and walked away with her.

3

"What was he saying to Sumi-chan?" Yaeko asked her friend sternly, closing the gate behind her. "He was waving his hands about as though he were making a speech."

"He says everybody is to blame for the Picadon. And now there is nothing to be done. . . . There will be more Picadons, they will repeat themselves like earthquakes and the whole world will be destroyed. He says that we all carry the brand of the Picadon, and we must all die. And it isn't any use trying to cure yourself, it's like trying to blow up a punctured ball. . . ."

Yaeko put her fingers to her ears and spat in disgust.

"I told you not to listen to him. He's crazy himself and he wants to drive everybody else crazy. . . . Only a madman could blame everybody for the Picadon. It's the Americans who are to blame; they made the Picadon and they dropped it on Japan. But people all over the world are fighting to prevent any more Hiroshimas. And they can do it too. The world won't be destroyed. Sumi-chan will take medicine and get well. And don't you dare talk to that half-witted fool any more. Next time he will try to persuade Sumi-chan to die with him, you'll see."

Yaeko pulled her scarf off her head and fanned herself with it, squatting on her heels beside the door.

"I thought Yae-chan would come over right away that evening as she promised," said Sumiko reproachfully. "Did you give the note to the teacher?"

"I was busy. . . ." Yaeko replied, dropping her voice. "I had to go to town to a certain place. . . . to the Democratic Youth League. I attended a memorial ceremony. Stalin-san has died. . . . Do you remember those leaflets that were posted up last year near the school? That was Stalin-san's New Year's message to the Japanese. He was against wars and Picadons. . . ."

"Akagi the school-teacher read us the message in school," said Sumiko.

"Yes. And he was dismissed for it. The ceremony was held on the day the funeral took place in Moscow. Over there it was noon but here in Japan it was six o'clock in the evening. As soon as the clock struck the hour, we all bowed in front of the portrait, and there was five minutes' silence. Then Stalin-san's greeting to the Japanese people was read out and after that we all filed past the portrait and lighted smoke-sticks before it. . . . There were meetings in other places that day too."

Yaeko fell silent. She walked over to the fence and, having made sure that nobody was in sight, sat down beside Sumiko and whispered:

"Sumi-chan hasn't told anybody about that time we saw Kan-chan and the others on the bridge?"

"No, I haven't. Why?"

"The police are hunting down Reds just now. They go about dressed as civilians nosing out information. . . . So you'll be very careful not to say anything, will you?"

"What about Takedo Yukio who was arrested on the day of the pea-throwing? Is he a Red too?"

"Everybody who is against war is considered a Red."

"Those who are against the Picadon too?"

Yaeko nodded. "Against the Picadon and against foreign military bases as well."

"Poor Yukio! What if he falls into the hands of the Amis. He'll die like those two from the Old Village."

"Yashuji and Toshio were turned over to the CIC, the American secret police. And they died. But the Japanese police don't turn prisoners over to the Americans any more. They might send them to the CIC for questioning, though."

"And then Yukio-san may never come back," Sumiko shuddered. "Why did those two die?"

Yaeko glanced over toward the fence. "Let's go to Akagi, the school-teacher. I have told him about you."

"Uncle won't let me." Sumiko pointed to her sandals and shoes hanging on a nail. "He won't let me take them without his permission. He's afraid I'll go to the meetings. . . ."

Yaeko frowned. "Perhaps Sumi-chan is afraid to go to meetings herself?"

"I'm not afraid, but I can't very well go in my bare feet," she murmured.

"Then here's what we'll do. Sumi-chan will tell her uncle that she is going to the doctor with me. Will he let you go with me?"

Sumiko considered this for a moment. Then she brightened. "I know," she said. "I'll make Uncle a new rain cape out of sedge and reeds. Ine-chan's mother taught me how to do it. I can do the bottom part quite well, but the shoulders come out all humpy somehow."

"Try using longer and thinner stalks. They don't stick out as much as the other kind. I'll come for you later on and we'll both ask your uncle to let us go. On the way back from town Sumi-chan can come straight to me and we'll go to the school-teacher."

"If the doctor says my blood is good I think I shall sell it," said Sumiko. "They pay four hundred yen. I could buy something with that

money. I could buy myself a pair of sandals and hide them from my uncle."

"Four hundred yen for a whole cup of blood. That's dirt cheap. Don't you think of doing it."

Yaeko said good-bye and went over to the gate. Seeing someone coming, she turned and put her finger to her lips, then lifted up the latch and hurried out.

4

The rain cape was not as much of a success as Sumiko might have wished. It bunched a little on one side and she had to weave an extra row of stalks into the back to make it watertight and that gave it a humpy look. But Yaeko and Ineko from her side of the fence were so loud in their praise that Sumiko's uncle finally softened and gave Sumiko her sandals to go to town with Yaeko.

The two girls set out early in the morning. The sun had risen over the mountains beyond the river and the fields were shrouded in mist. In the middle of the field stood a scarecrow in a battered straw umbrella hat and a rain cape made of reeds. A bow and arrow were attached to one of the cross-sticks that served for arms. The rudely-woven cape stuck out comically.

The girls glanced at it and burst out laughing.

"The spitting image of Sumi-chan's uncle," remarked Yaeko.

They came to a low hill covered with small gravestones set closely together. Yaeko said good-bye to her friend and promised to wait for her in the evening, telling her to come straight home from the clinic, and on no account to sell her blood.

Sumiko followed the path down the hillside. Some distance ahead, at the point where the road forked off to a fishing village, she saw a young man in a black jersey sitting by the roadside. Sumiko crossed over to the other side. When she came up to the man she glanced at him quickly, then turned away and hurried on. Ryukichi, for it was he, appeared to be engrossed in brushing his puttees.

She had reached the little bridge when she heard footsteps behind her.

"I gave you a lot of trouble last time with that slip of paper," said Ryukichi. "I want to thank you for passing it on."

She nodded, but did not turn round. He walked behind her at a respectful distance. To their right rose the forest-clad hills. Tall red pines and hornbeams lined the road and the hillside was a mass of frothy pink where the cherry trees were in bloom. Behind a high barbed-wire fence on the left side of the road stood a group of white buildings, circular and rectangular with windows resembling embrasures. Between two observation towers was a flag mast with the stars and stripes flying from it.

Ryukichi walked beside Sumiko humming a song with a curious refrain:

*"Tokyo boogie-woogie
Rizumi uki-uki
Kokoro zuki-zuki
Waku-waku. . . ."*

"I heard that on a radio programme from Tokyo," he said apologetically. "Trying to imitate the Americans. Idiotic song!"

"Awfully stupid," Sumiko agreed.

He broke off a hornbeam twig with greenish yellow blossoms and was about to present it to her when a motorcycle shot out suddenly from behind the bend. Ryukichi pushed Sumiko out of the way with his shoulder. Taken by surprise, she lost her footing, tripped on a stone and fell on to the grass. One of her sandals slipped off and dropped down the hillside into the bushes. Ryukichi dived down after it. The motorcyclist stopped. To Sumiko's surprise he was not an American but a young Japanese in a blue beret, yellow leather jacket and dark red trousers. He smiled and screwed up his small, widely-set eyes. She noticed that his arms were so short that they barely reached down to his trouser pockets.

"Not hurt, I hope?" he inquired. "I frightened you. Excuse me."

He raised two fingers to his forehead, mounted his bike and rode off. Sumiko followed him with her eyes.

"Must have been abroad recently," she said.

"That's a Nisei, an American Japanese," said Ryukichi handing Sumiko her sandal. "Niseis are Japanese who are born and brought up in America and are United States citizens. The Americans brought a lot of them over here to act as interpreters and run errands of all kinds. That one works over at their base most likely. Dressed up like a parrot."

"A boogie-woogie," said Sumiko.

They laughed. Ryukichi walked on ahead and for a time neither of them spoke. Then Ryukichi related how one night when he and Kanji were returning from town they had very nearly caught a live fox cub.

"Are you a Red like Kan-chan?" Sumiko asked.

"Oh, you can't compare me to him!" said Ryukichi warmly. "Kanji joined the Party immediately after the war. He was working on the railway at the time. Later on he was kicked out for being a Red. Then he attended courses at the prefecture committee of the Party. He's a brainy chap."

"Kan-chan and Yae-chan are very good friends," said Sumiko softly.

"I'm glad, Kan-chan is very nice."

"They want to be together, but Yae-chan's father won't hear of it." Ryukichi shook his head. "Yae-chan is a brave girl generally, but at home she is a coward. She is afraid to disobey her father."

On a hill in the distance appeared a row of shacks painted in the camouflage colours, black, brown and green, and surrounded by a barbed wire fence. In between the shacks were hovels made of rusty tin signs, bits of plywood and old boards.

After a while Sumiko untied the little bundle that hung from her neck and took out a wheatcake and offered it to Ryukichi. He refused it, and, producing a little round roll from his pocket, commenced to nibble at it.

"You can break your teeth on these rolls. Know how they make them? They gather up all the bread crumbs and old crusts and instead of giving them to the pigs they moisten them, roll them into balls and dry them again. And this is what you get. They think anything will do for us poor beggars. That's how they spoil your taste for decent food."

"You must put them in hot water first," said Sumiko.

"Oh, that's sheer luxury," said Ryukichi laughing. "We moisten them with our saliva."

They reached the outskirts of the town and crossed the square to the bus station. Americans in yellow baseball suits were training on a baseball field adjoining the square. The loud smack of the bat hitting the white leather ball echoed on the air. A huge Negro in a red sweater and baseball cap was pitching.

"Shoeshine, please!" shouted the shoeblack boys, banging the shoe brushes on their boxes in an effort to drum up trade. Souvenir vendors stood at their stalls calling "Hallo! Hallo! Welcome! Come in!" to passing foreign soldiers. There were other foreign soldiers besides Americans—soldiers wearing berets with red pompons on top, soldiers in berets without pompons and soldiers in large flat caps.

Sumiko and Ryukichi made their way with difficulty through the crowd to the street leading to the centre of town. On the right side of the street the green- and red-roofed houses of the American quarter could be seen behind the tall white fence. Several jeeps with yellow stripes on their bonnets stood in front of the main entrance, and MPs in bluish helmets and heavy cords over their chests paced up and down the pavement. Under the plane trees near by strolled Japanese girls with heavily made-up faces, dressed in European dresses but with wooden sandals on their bare feet.

Stretched across the entire width of the street was a pale blue streamer with an inscription in huge yellow characters: "Donate your blood for the valiant United Nations troops!"

A large poster of a soldier in a helmet carrying a sword with a leafy branch twined around it hung over the entrance to Fuji Hotel. Underneath were the words: "Help the brave soldiers of the United Nations who are fighting for peace in Asia! Donate your blood!"

Sumiko and Ryukichi stopped in front of a shop window.

"Did Ryukichi give his blood for a test when those people came to the village in the Red Cross car?"

"They'll have to get along without my blood," growled Ryukichi.

"But they will pay for it . . . four hundred yen for a cup," said Sumiko, her eyes roving over the goods displayed in the window. "I think I'll sell mine."

"Don't do it," said Ryukichi quickly. "We must not help the Amis."

All the articles in the window had small white price tags attached to them. Yanagiya hair oil cost 200 yen; a jar of Kurabu face powder cost 300 yen, a tube of nail polish, 375 yen.

Sumiko gazed longingly at a green silk umbrella. The price tag said 800 yen. Two cups of blood.

In one corner of the window stood a big doll in a Japanese kimono embroidered in gold. The doll's right arm was bared and a hypodermic needle was stuck into it. The hypodermic was attached by a rubber tube to a bottle on which was painted a pale blue flag with a branch-entwined globe. Beside the figure was a sign with the words: "I have given my blood for the United Nations army. What about you?"

In her left hand the doll held a tiny bottle of "Kiss Me" perfume which had a price tag marked 600 yen. One and a half cups of blood for that tiny bottle no bigger than your little finger! And that red leather purse cost three and a half cups of blood.

Sumiko moved to the next window. A tin of pineapple cost two and a half cups of blood, a box of Koronban biscuits cost three cups, and a square bottle of White Horse whiskey was worth the equivalent of ten cups of human blood.

A huge poster showing a gorilla kissing a woman who was dressed in a bathing suit practically torn to shreds hung over the entrance to the Piccadilly picture palace. From the price-list beside the box-office she saw that a numbered seat cost the equivalent of half a cup of blood. She quickened her pace. Passing by a small restaurant with a bead curtain over the doorway, she saw a menu printed in gold lettering on a black lacquer board. A portion of broiled eel cost a cup of blood. Sumiko swallowed her saliva and hurried on.

"Bargain sale! Big reduction!" read a large sign displayed in the windows of one of the big shops. The nasal voice of a loud-speaker at the shop entrance blared in her ears: "Buy the new Parker-51 pen. Six thousand four hundred yen!" Sixteen cups of blood! The loud-speaker went on listing prices. A bed for newly-weds with embroidered coverlets—ninety cups of blood. Sumiko passed her sleeve over her perspiring forehead. An array of posters, advertisements and price tags in all colours of the rainbow danced crazily before her eyes. Everything in these shops, in these houses, on this street, in the whole of this town—everything was sold for blood. She saw people, thousands of people carrying cups of blood in their hands, under their arms, on their backs, people on bicycles, holding trays with cups of blood balanced on them; she saw lorries speeding by loaded to the top with cups full of blood.

"What's the matter? Are you ill?" Ryukichi asked, anxiously searching her face. He caught her by the arm.

"It will pass in a minute . . ." she whispered, covering her eyes with her hand.

They passed a garden with a memorial obelisk in the middle, and turned off into a quiet little side-street. A sign over the door of the Arimitsu clinic said: "Blood for the United Nations forces accepted here." And on the fence beside it someone had chalked the words: "Not one drop of blood for the invaders! Down with the war in Korea! No more. . . ."

"No more Hiroshima!" They hadn't time to finish it," said Ryukichi.

He glanced round. A cyclist holding a bundle over his head was approaching from the other side of the street. There was no one else in sight. Ryukichi felt in his pocket and pulled out a pencil stub, quickly added the word "Hiroshima" to the sign and drew something beside it. The cyclist rode past whistling a tune.

"What's that?" asked Sumiko, studying the drawing.

"A dove," replied Ryukichi. "See, its wings are cut. It's flying." Sumiko smiled and wrinkled her little nose.

"I thought it was a straw rain cape. I saw one just like it on a scarecrow this morning. . . ."

"No, it's the Picasso dove," said Ryukichi. "Now run along. And don't you dare give any blood. Not a drop of blood for the invaders!"

"No more Hiroshima!" replied Sumiko as she entered the gates and walked up the neat gravel path to the clinic.

The registry clerk, a pimply youth in a student's uniform, wrote down her name and said that the doctor was expecting her. There was a notice tacked to the clerk's table: "Donors take note: Group AB not required."

Three women were sitting beside a small stove talking in low voices. The fire had gone out.

A nurse appeared in the doorway and beckoned to Sumiko.

"I had a telephone message about your case," said Doctor Arimitsu waving her to the white stool that stood in the middle of his office.

He had a round good-natured face, and a small moustache under his nose. He examined Sumiko's eyes and shoulder, listened carefully to her breathing with his stethoscope pressed to her back.

"We shall have to make a blood test," he said. "It is impossible to say anything without it. When did you last have a blood test?"

"In Hiroshima . . . the Amis made it. They gave me a brass tag."

"A tag?" the doctor looked surprised. "So you have been examined by American doctors?"

He shook his head and looked disturbed. "Why didn't you say anything about it before? That tag shows that you must be registered with the ABCC, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. You will have to see the American doctors first. Go to the medical division at the military base headquarters. If they say the tag is out of date and you are no longer on their records, you can come back to me. Otherwise, there may be trouble."

"I don't want to go to the Amis."

"I'm afraid you'll have to," the doctor went over to the washstand and began soaping his hands. "They gave you that tag. . . ."

Sumiko pointed to her left shoulder. "It hurts me," she said. "And my head aches very often. Perhaps the atomic fever has already started."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot do anything for you," the doctor clapped his hands to summon the nurse. "Next please."

He stroked Sumiko's shoulder.

"You be a good girl and go to the American doctors and find out about that tag. You must do that without fail. Otherwise we are both liable to get into trouble."

"But I need some medicine. . . . Some ointment for my scar. It aches so much at night that it keeps me awake."

An old woman wearing a kimono with an embroidered crest entered. The doctor motioned her to the chair and began talking to her. The nurse took Sumiko gently by the arm and piloted her out of the office.

When she came out of the gates, Sumiko looked about her. Ryukichi was squatting on his heels behind the water tower.

"Well, did they give you any medicine?" he asked.

Sumiko told him about her conversation with the doctor. Ryukichi clucked his tongue.

"The swine . . . he's scared of the Amis! Wait, there's going to be a new infirmary opened soon, it will have good doctors. Not all our doctors are like this Arimitsu."

They made their way back to the bus station on the outskirts of the town. Ryukichi noticed a lorry with some workers in it, standing by the kerb. He went over and spoke to the driver. Then he called Sumiko over.

"They're going to the dam," he told her as he helped her up. "We'll get off at the round rock."

On a telephone pole near the lorry she noticed a sign written in India ink: "The House of Culture of the Democratic Youth announces lantern slide picture 'Sport Festival of Democratic Youth' and a puppet show entitled 'The Trickery of Messrs. Yugeh and Sakuma,' by Katsu Gengo. Sunday 4 p.m. Admission free."

The driver blew several long blasts on his horn. In response a number of workers carrying bundles came running out of a low wooden building marked "Lunch-room," and climbed into the lorry. The last to clamber up was a thin lad in a cap with a dark bruise on his cheek. A little old man in a shabby hat and a scarf wound round his neck called to the lad and the two sat in front behind the cab and began a whispered conversation. Noticing Ryukichi, the lad with the bruised face called him over and said something to him, glancing in Sumiko's direction. His eyes had an angry look.

As the lorry skirted the forest and came out on to the straight road, the old man suddenly rapped on the roof of the cab. The car slowed down. Up ahead, where the road branched off to the military base, stood a group of Americans in uniform.

"Listen, Tsumoto," said the old man to the lad with the angry eyes. "They've got those damn detectors. They're going to search us."

"They've no right to stop us," said Tsumoto. "We'll step on the accelerator and get through."

The old man shook his head. "There are no laws for the Amis. If they order us to stop, we'll have to stop. Can't afford to take any risks," and he pushed Tsumoto over to the edge of the lorry. "Better get out here. You can go by way of Kurotani."

Ryukichi pulled a small package out of his jersey and gave it to Tsumoto. The young man jumped off the lorry right into a clump of bushes on the edge of the road. At the crossroads the lorry was stopped. An American MP came over and signed to everyone to get out.

Two soldiers passed metal discs attached to long poles over each of the passengers in turn. When they came to the man standing next to Sumiko, the soldier examining him shouted something. The worker pulled out of his pocket a pipe with a metal holder and a tobacco box.

A watch and a metal eye-glass case were "discovered" on the old man and a bunch of keys on the driver. The MP did not even bother to examine them. He looked into the cab and said: "Okay." The lorry moved off.

"How long has this been going on?" one of the workers asked Ryukichi.

"Started not long ago. Those are portable detectors. They're looking for weapons. If they come on any metal object, dark spots appear on the disc."

The old man pushed his hat to the back of his head and with a glance at Sumiko, remarked: "They need to invent a machine to detect what's going on inside our heads. Then all those discs of theirs would explode in their faces."

At the Jizo statue Sumiko got off and nodded a farewell to the cheerful old man.

"Go straight to Yae-chan," said Ryukichi. "I'll see you later on."

Sumiko nodded. The lorry proceeded on its way to the Old Village.

It was quite dark when Sumiko and Yaeko set out for the school-teacher's house. Yaeko noticed that Sumiko was pinching her neck.

"I see Sumiko is scared," she laughed. "I invited Haru-chan but she said she was afraid to go."

"I'm not afraid. But I can't imagine what they do at meetings. . . ."

"At tonight's meeting," Yaeko whispered in her ear. "Now don't be scared . . . you will see Katsu Gengo himself."

The tiny hallway of the teacher's house was a confusion of wooden sandals, straw sandals and rubber-soled canvas boots.

"Oh look," murmured Sumiko. "They're all men. . . . I'm ashamed to go in."

"Go along home then. You little coward!" said Yaeko.

She took off her sandals, laid them in a corner of the hallway and went into the house. Sumiko poked her tongue out at her friend and followed suit. They went through the kitchen and sat down on the threshold of the room where the meeting was being held.

At a table next to the alcove under a hanging kerosene lamp sat the school-teacher Akagi and the little old man Sumiko had seen in the lorry. His head was quite bald and he wore the same scarf around his neck. The teacher, his unshaven face pale and worn, sat resting his head in his hands. The room was so crowded that the floor mats were hidden from view. The audience had overflowed on to the verandah which opened on the inner court. Kanji sat cross-legged at the teacher's back, and Sumiko caught a glimpse behind him of Ryukichi's tousled head. Next to Kanji, with his hands clasped round his knees, sat the young man with the angry eyes, Tsumoto. She saw some young folk she knew from the Old Village and Eastern Village, but the rest were strangers—from the dam site and the mountain villages most likely. There were a few guests from town as well—a pink-cheeked student with big eyes, and a plump, plain-featured young woman wearing large horn-rimmed glasses and European clothes, and smoking a cigarette.

Some booklets were being passed around. Others lay in a heap on a small table beside the teacher.

The old man pointed to the black-board set up in the alcove. There were three letters written on it: "MSA."

"Take note of these three letters," he said. "Let them sear themselves on your memories. MSA stands for Mutual Security Act. On the basis of this Act, Japan is being inveigled into signing a treaty that will turn her into a base for the American war industry in the Far East." He turned to the student and pointed to the booklets laid out on the table. "These little booklets here have already sounded the alarm. But you people are just beginning to wake up."

The student laughed and rubbed the back of his neck in embarrassment.

"We knew Grandad would give it to us. . . . Yes, we are a little late, but we will soon catch up. We have already arranged talks in the House of Culture and at the cement works. Mariko-san here," he nodded toward the plump young woman in the glasses, "has already addressed the telegraph operators."

The old man, whom the youngsters called Grandad, grunted and turning to Mariko said something to her in a low voice. Heiske, old Heizo's youngest son, prodded by the student, gave a rather incoherent account of how last year landlord Sakuma had cut off the supply of water to all but his own tenants. The peasants who were left without water complained to the village Elder and after lengthy negotiations Sakuma finally consented to re-open the pipes, but now charged nearly twice as much for the use of the water as before.

"Why don't you tell us how you helped Sakuma to stop up the pipes," said Kanji loudly. "Come on, let everyone hear how you crept out at the dead of night. . . ."

The pink-cheeked student stopped him. "Never mind," he said, suppressing a smile, "there's no need to bring that up now."

"It wasn't my fault," stammered Heiske. "I didn't want to do it. Father made me. I'll never do anything like that again. . . ."

Everyone laughed. Kanji laughed louder than anyone else and he slapped Heiske good-naturedly on the back. Yaeko nudged Sumiko with her elbow and signed with her eyes toward the verandah where Ineko was sitting with her back against the wooden pillar next to Yasaku, the son of the village blacksmith who had died recently. Ineko's face was flushed. She was fanning herself with her sleeve and whispering something into Yasaku's ear.

The meeting went on to discuss the coming fern-picking excursion. Every spring before the rice planting began the young people would get together and go off to the hills to gather ferns. It was an old custom. But during the war there had been no time for fern-picking, and in any case there had been too many anti-aircraft batteries and observation points on the hills. Sugino proposed combining fern-picking this year with preparations for May Day and holding an open-air meeting and concert on the field near Monkey Forest after the fern-picking.

"Isn't it too late for ferns?" asked Grandad. "In my time we used to pick ferns much earlier. They will be hard and dry by now."

Sugino smiled. "Oh, no, Grandad," he said. "I'm an expert when it comes to ferns. The sweetest ferns in the world grow in our mountains here. And the best time to pick them is at the end of April or the beginning of May."

Tsumoto and Kanji supported Sugino's proposal but pointed out that the programme of the concert and meeting must be carefully planned, and that a committee be elected for that purpose. Particular care should be taken in drafting the agenda of the meeting which must cover all the most burning issues of the day.

"The first item should be the MSA," said the school-teacher. "The people of this area must realize that MSA is a direct threat to them. A short while ago there was only a fuel storage dump here; later on the landing strip was built; then the artillery range . . . and now they're putting up barracks and some other buildings. The Enola base is rapidly expanding. And the day will come, and very soon too, when Enola will start a new offensive. If it swallows up the land belonging to the local inhabitants they will be left to starve. All the young men will be drafted into the army and the girls will end up in brothels. . . ."

The old man banged his fist on the table. "And they will all find themselves in the power of the American secret police, the CIC. For the Ameri-

cans will virtually control the activities of the Japanese police force. And each one of us may share the fate of our comrades Yasuji and Toshio who fell into the hands of the Amis last year and died of some unknown cause. . . ."

Yasaku raised his hand.

"This meeting ought to start a campaign to collect signatures demanding the release of Takeda Yukio," he said in his ready voice. "He too may be killed. . . . We mustn't let that happen."

He broke off, muttered something inaudible and sat down in confusion. Ineko clapped, and the others followed suit.

"We should elect a committee," said the teacher. "I nominate Fukui Kanji as representing the wood-cutters and charcoal burners from Monastery Hill, Iketani. . . ." he turned to the student, "from the Democratic Youth League, and Sugino from the Old Village. Any other nominations?"

There was a show of hands. The teacher called Ryukichi over and they looked to where Yasako and Sumiko were sitting. Sumiko blushed and stopped pinching her neck. At that moment someone handed her the pile of booklets which had been passed around during the meeting. Since it was too dark by the door to read, Sumiko went into the kitchen, but it was no lighter there. The booklets were in multigraphed handwriting on coarse brown paper and many of the letters were illegible. In the dim light of the wick lamp Sumiko could only make out the lettering on the covers.

"*New Shoots*. Published by the youth group of the trade union at the Yawata plant."

"*Ore*. Published by the Cultural Section of the Miners' Union, Kamioka, Gifu prefecture."

"*Windmill*. Published by a group of poets of Aichi prefecture."

"*Glowing Embers*. Published by the Literary Circle of the Miners' Union, Miuta, Hokkaido."

There was *The Signal* put out by the Cultural Section of the Youth Movement in Shimozu Village; *Little Flame* organ of the Cultural Section of the Toyama Railway Depot; *White Tower* issued by the Kagawa prefecture branch of the Democratic Youth League; *The Hoe, Thirty-Six Mounds, The Barricade, Our Banner, Parole, Poets of Fuwa County*, Gifu prefecture; *Writers of the Factory and Office Workers of the Numajiri Power Station, The Telephone Operator's Voice*.

Ineko came and sat down beside Sumiko, chattering excitedly and still fanning herself with her sleeve. "We're going to put out a magazine too. *Our Land* we're going to call it. We've decided today. We have organized literary circles over at the dam on Monastery Hill and in Eastern Village, and Yasaku has already written several verses, wonderful ones. I copied them out and learned them off by heart. And Akagi, the teacher, praised Yasaku today for his work. Yasaku has already learned to operate the duplicator machine."

"Did Ine-chan get permission to come to the meeting?"

Ineko shook her head and giggled.

"I said I was going to Yae-chan's to help her with her sewing, and I came here instead with Yasaku. . . . I was a little scared at first. . . . I was afraid they'd do something awful. Was Sumi-chan afraid?"

"A little," Sumiko confessed.

The sound of hand-clapping came from the room. Sumiko and Ineko

tiptoed back and sat down in the doorway. Ineko handed the bundle of magazines to the person sitting in front.

A thickset young man sitting next to the student was speaking. He had a red, weather-beaten face and he spoke in a hoarse voice.

"The Americans have put up barbed wire on Big Cape; their mine-destroyers and patrol boats snoop along the coast day and night and now their gunnery practice has scared all the fish away. Not long ago a Democratic Youth League brigade came to our village and told us that one way of putting a stop to all this injustice is to unite the young folk in literary groups and put out some small publication of our own. So now we have a literary circle and we are going to issue a magazine from time to time. Some of our fellows have written a dozen or two verses. Of course they aren't exactly classics, but they're the sort that get you just the same."

"How are you going to print them?" the student inquired.

"So far we write them out by hand. Five or six copies at a time, and pass them around. Now we're collecting money for paper, and after that. . . ."

"Listen, Matao," Tsumoto interrupted him. "That's no good—writing everything by hand and putting out five or six copies." He turned to the student. "Iketani, we must get them a duplicator and paper."

Iketani nodded and made a note on his pad.

Everyone stiffened to attention as the roar of cars was heard outside.

"The jeeps are out again," said Sugino. "They're looking for radio transmitters. The police have raided the dam three times in the past month. . . ."

The old man laughed. "They're looking for lemonade bombs too. . . ."

When the noise subsided, Tsumoto asked for the floor. "The bourgeois papers are full of stories about lemonade bottle bombs," he said. "They say the Communists make them. But the Japanese youth have a more powerful weapon than lemonade bottle bombs. Our bombs are made of paper, the paper that goes into the hundreds and thousands of little journals which are being put out today all over Japan. These paper bombs set the hearts of all honest people aflame. And every magazine we put out, even in twenty or thirty copies, is a rallying point for all young patriots. For all young men and women who can write, draw and run a simple printing apparatus. . . ."

"Yes, and who know how to gather material as well," added the teacher, "and who wish to help the magazine by circulating it and collecting money to keep it going. . . ."

"In a word, the most active section of the youth is grouped around these magazines," Tsumoto continued. "We Communists and Democratic Youth League members attach the greatest importance to this mass literary movement. Every magazine is a fighting unit on the battlefield of struggle for our freedom and independence and for world peace. The movement is gaining momentum in the towns and the industrial centres, but in the villages, and that includes our own district, it has made very little headway so far."

Grandad surveyed the gathering and smiled.

"Yes, in town Katsu Gengo works very well; he has any number of helpers there. Now he needs helpers in the countryside. So you must all come to his assistance."

Everyone clapped. "So now we have two rallying points in our district," said Kanji. "One is *Our Land* and the other is the fishermen's

journal. That will do to start with. We must do our best to train new assistants for Katsu Gengo as soon as possible."

He closed the meeting, asking the members of the newly-elected committee to remain behind.

8

Sumiko and Ineko were the last to leave. Yaeko had gone ahead with Mariko, the girl from the city. A warm drizzle was falling and it was so dark that they had to keep close to the fences so as not to stray from their path. Soon Ryukichi and Yasaku caught up with them. Ineko whispered something to Yasaku and they walked quickly ahead and were soon swallowed up by the darkness.

"Well, was it so terrible?" Ryukichi asked Sumiko.

"Akagi, the school-teacher looks much older than when I last saw him. . . . I think that bald-headed old man is a darling. Such a cheerful old chap."

"Grandad is an old Communist, he spent fifteen years in prison on Hokkaido. He has only one lung; that's the result of beatings. He has been in jail again twice since the war ended . . . for writing articles exposing the Amis."

"That young man who rode with us in the lorry . . . Tsumoto . . . he spoke quite well, didn't he? Is he a student?"

"No, he was a mechanic at the city electric station, but he was dismissed as a Red, and now he works at a cement factory. He's member of the city committee of the Democratic Youth League."

"Yasaku and Heiske were the only ones from our village. I don't know any of the others. . . ."

"I brought over some of the fellows from our district, there were some from Monastery Hill, from the dam and from Kurotani. We're going to have a duplicating machine too and we'll print our own magazine. *Our Land* it will be called."

"Will Sumi-chan help us?" he added after a brief pause.

"What could I do?"

"You could help with the duplicator. Yae-chan told me Sumi-chan was very good at drawing in school."

"I can only draw birds . . . and acroplanes."

"That's just what we need. You'll do the illustrations. Will you come?"

"My uncle won't let me. Besides, I don't know where to go."

"We usually meet in the evenings after work. You can tell your uncle you are going to see your girl friends. Yae-chan can come for you."

When they reached her gate, Sumiko stopped.

"I am a little frightened . . . but I'll come," she whispered and, touching Ryukichi's sleeve lightly, she slipped into the yard. "Go away at once," she called softly.

She found the door slightly ajar. Her uncle was already asleep. Sumiko made her bed in the dark, undressed and lay down. The drizzle had changed to a steady downpour. Her uncle groaned in his sleep and suddenly gave vent to a thin wail of pain. Sumiko went over to him and began massaging his shoulders.

"So you're back?" he said, his voice thick with sleep. "Why so late?"

"There was a meeting . . ." she broke off and added hastily: "A

meeting of . . . er . . . patients in the doctor's office. They read articles from magazines about all sorts of diseases."

"Did he give you any medicine?"

"No, he only examined me and told me to come back for treatment. But only in the evenings, because day patients have to pay a fee, but in the evenings he treats free of charge."

Her uncle muttered angrily and turned over on his other side.

Sumiko could not fall asleep for a long time. Her shoulder began to ache, and then the itching started. Her neck was sore from frequent pinching. Sumiko got up and drank some water, found a baked potato in a pan and ate it. After a while the rain stopped. It was very quiet. The frogs were almost silent and even the watchman's rattle did not disturb the stillness.

Sumiko, lying awake and listening to the silence, heard a faint whispering sound. It came from somewhere far away, and it was like the rustling sound of the silkworms in the mulberry trees. Perhaps the rain had started again. Sumiko turned on her mat and her chaff-filled pillow emitted a faint rustle.

With this whispering sound in her ears she thought of the hundreds of little magazines that were being published all over the country. From Hokkaido to Kyushu, everywhere, in the towns, in the villages, in the fisheries, at factories and mines. Everywhere these little magazines were being printed and read. The rustling of their pages could be heard all over the country. Thousands, tens of thousands of people—miners, fishermen, railwaymen, students, soil-tillers, telephone operators, wood-cutters were writing, pouring out their troubles on to the pages of these little magazines. Writing because they wanted a better life for the Japanese, for all people in a world in which there would be no more wars, no more Picadons.

At this very moment, perhaps, Katsu Gengo was busy somewhere writing or drawing. Or printing on the duplicator. She wondered what he looked like. Did he resemble Kan-chan, or the pink-cheeked student Iketani? Or the young man with the angry eyes, Tsumoto? Katsu Gengo was fighting against Picadons—he must be a good man. Like Grandad and Akagi, the school-teacher.

All good people were fighting to stop aeroplanes from flying over towns and villages and killing innocent people. They were fighting to prevent any more Hiroshimas.

She saw a bright blue morning sky. She saw a city spread out on the shore of the ocean, and suddenly three aeroplanes appeared in the morning sky. Children playing in the streets of the city looked up at the aeroplanes. A woman's name, the name of the mother of the flyer who dropped the Picadon, was painted on the body of one of the three planes. That same name had been given to a military base on the seashore near the fishing village.

Drive those aeroplanes away! Up into the sky shot hundreds and hundreds of shells—slim magazines printed on grey coarse paper, the cheapest brand. Deadly ammunition manufactured by thousands of young men and women like Ryu-chan and Yae-chan, like Sumiko herself. They needed help. Sumiko would help them. Out with the devils, in with luck! Out with the Amis, in with peace! No more Hiroshima!

THE DUPLICATOR

1

Yaeko came for Sumiko several times, but Sumiko was busy; either she was helping her uncle plant soya beans between the rows of buckwheat, or else she was helping to clean the reservoir, or hauling rubble and clay for a new wall around the reservoir. Several times her uncle took her to the Sakuma estate to clean the garden paths and clip the bushes of Chinese camellias and mauve rhododendrons.

Her uncle still kept her sandals hidden and would not allow her to go out without permission. And on the day it was learned that the police had banned all May Day gatherings in the vicinity of the base, her uncle had said:

"It turns out that the Reds wanted to make trouble here in our village. They hold all sorts of meetings too. The Elder says that the people who go to those meetings swear terrible oaths and sign them with their blood. It's a good thing I didn't let you go anywhere or else you might have got mixed up in it too."

But he inspected Sumiko's fingers to make sure there were no sign of any cuts on them.

"I'm too busy getting treatment to bother about Reds," said Sumiko.

That night she complained of severe pains in her shoulder. She told her uncle the pain had started ten days ago but she had borne it in silence because she did not want to worry him. And there were red and green spots before her eyes all the time.

Her uncle lost his temper.

"You should have told me at once," he stormed. "You must go to the doctor tomorrow without fail. The rice planting will begin soon and there will be no time for doctors then."

The next evening Sumiko ran over to Yaeko's place and they set out for town. They took the road to the reservoir, but before reaching it they turned off to the right and descended into a narrow depression. There had been a dug-out here during the war, but later on the entrance had been blocked up with boulders. From here the path climbed steeply up to a cliff with three red pines on its crest, and continued along the edge of the cliff to a bamboo bridge spanning a narrow rocky gorge. From here the path swept up the hillside again.

"See that rock?" said Yaeko. "It looks like a dolphin with its tail raised. Remember it. Next time you will go alone."

"Suppose I lose my way? Can't I leave some sort of landmarks?" Sumiko asked.

Yaeko frowned and shook her head.

"The police will find them and they'll be very grateful to Sumi-chan for showing them the way."

Something rustled behind the bushes. Sumiko gave a smothered cry and stopped dead. Yaeko also stopped and listened.

"Is it a snake?" said Sumiko.

The rustling was repeated. Presently a low whistle was heard. Yaeko whistled in response and they went on toward a hut standing between two fallen trees. Beside it was a heap of charred stones—the remnants of a charcoal stove. Yaeko made a clicking sound with her tongue, and fol-

lowed it up with a birdcall. The same sound was echoed from inside the hut. As the girls approached, Ryukichi's head bound in a scarf appeared in the doorway. Sumiko quickly turned aside to give a hasty pat to her hair.

Inside they found Matao, the red-faced fisherman whom they had met at the teacher's house. He was sitting on the straw-covered floor beside a large metal plate on a crate which served as a table. By the light of a candle thrust into a bottle in lieu of a candlestick, Matao was working a primitive duplicator. He would put a sheet of clean paper on the metal plate and cover it with a stencil paper which he would roll with an inked roller.

"This is our printing press," said Ryukichi.

Sumiko sat down beside the box and gazed at it in respectful awe.

But Yaeko's attitude was anything but respectful. She ran a finger over the plate, inspected it critically and pursed her lips.

"Filthy," she said. "You must clean it more often or the paper will get dirty. Is the stuff we brought last time ready yet?"

Ryukichi with an apologetic air sat down at a box in a corner and began to write quickly with a metal stylo. A little iron lantern with a candle inside stood on the box beside him.

"You've left it to the last moment again!" Yaeko said sternly. She glanced over Ryukichi's shoulder. "And why aren't you disguising your handwriting? Look, all your letters lean over to one side and look squashed. Anyone can tell you wrote it. That's no good. What is Matao working on?"

"He brought some copy for their magazine. Iketani promised them a duplicator but they want to put out their first issue as soon as possible." Yaeko compressed her lips again.

"This is a secret press. If we start letting everybody use it, it won't be secret for long. That's no way to work."

"Just this once," pleaded Ryukichi softly. "Next time. . . ."

Matao snorted. "Who is she bossing? Women ought to know their place instead of going about telling everybody off."

Yaeko threw an angry glance in his direction and turned to Ryukichi.

"That young man from Kurotani Village who turned out to be an informer was also against admitting women to meetings and circles. It was because of him that the May Day meeting was banned. Only the most reliable people should be allowed to come here. . . ."

The fisherman ran the roller over the paper and banged his fist on the box. He turned to Yaeko, his voice hoarse with rage.

"Hold your tongue . . . you . . ."

At that moment Sumiko, glancing at the sheet that had just come off the plate, pursed her lips in imitation of Yaeko and said sternly:

"Look here, nobody will be able to read this. It's too dirty."

"It's the ink," said Matao shortly.

"You mustn't press your whole weight on the roller, as if you were rowing a boat on a stormy sea," said Sumiko.

Matao measured her with a glance and his lip curled.

"In our village . . . when little girls talk to men . . ."

"In your village," Yaeko cut in, "great hulking lads allow old men to box their ears without a murmur. In your village last year they tried curing an old woman of some illness by laying her on the beach and beating her with boat-hooks to chase out the spirit of the fox. They broke a rib

and nearly killed her. Everyone knows that fishermen are the most backward folk of all."

"Yes, and the most conceited too," added Sumiko. "They're famous all over the world."

Ryu-chan rolled on to the straw with laughter. Matao glared ferociously at the girls, then turned away and spat in disgust.

"A pair of wildcats," he hissed. "Mad, both of them."

Yaeko and Sumiko exchanged glances and smiled. Yaeko picked up a printed sheet and read it aloud:

*"'Tis springtime,
And the Amis with their nets
Are chasing pretty butterflylies."*

"Seventeen syllables. That's a hokku," said Ryukichi, "Yasaku wrote it."

Sumiko looked puzzled. "But what does it mean?" she asked.

"There will be an explanation," said Ryukichi. "It refers to something that happened last Sunday near the fishing village. An American car ran into a tree and a box fell out of the back. It was full of bottles. One of the bottles broke and a swarm of black moths flew out. The Americans were terribly scared. They put on masks and white coats and rushed after the moths with butterfly nets and poured some strong-smelling liquid over each one they caught. . . ."

"They ruined all the vegetable fields outside the village," said Matao.

"They say in town that the bottles were being taken to the airfield to be loaded on a plane bound for Korea."

Yaeko nodded. "It's a good hokku. Everyone will understand what it means. Those were infected moths."

"We must ask Yasaku to write another one for our magazine," said Sumiko. "About the way they cure old women in certain villages. . . ."

Ryukichi chuckled. Matao opened his mouth to retort but changed his mind.

Yaeko pointed to some stencils lying beside the duplicator. "You've got quite enough copy here. When are you putting it out?"

Matao glanced at her and addressed his answer to Ryukichi: "We wanted to have it ready by tomorrow, but we won't make it."

"What are you calling it?" Yaeko asked.

"*The Fox's Voice*, I daresay," Sumiko put in.

Matao pretended not to have heard. Ryukichi answered for him: "*The Helmsman*. It's Matao's idea."

"That's a good name," said Yaeko and squatting down beside the duplicator, turned back the sleeves of her kimono.

Sumiko did likewise, and they both began to help Matao. Yaeko laid the clean sheets of paper on the plate and Sumiko took off the printed sheets and piled them up. They worked swiftly and in silence. Ryukichi wrote busily in his corner, sprawled over his rude desk.

When the printing was done, Matao smiled for the first time.

"We don't let women into our boats because it's bad luck," he said. "We'll see what sort of luck you'll bring our magazine."

He carefully wrapped the printed sheets in a piece of canvas, nodded to the girls and started for the door.

"It will be a very lucky magazine, you'll see," Sumiko called after him. "Because women's hands helped print it."

Ryukichi showed Sumiko how to use the duplicator. She quickly learned to ink the roller neatly and run it lightly over the paper so that all the letters came out evenly.

From that day on Sumiko went regularly to the hut. She soon learned the road and was able to make the journey alone. Coming down the hillside in the dark was a little frightening, but she got used to it.

She told her uncle not to worry if she was late; she could always get a lift on one of the dam or glass factory lorries going her way.

2

One day as she was working in the hut with Ryukichi, they heard a clucking outside. Ryukichi pricked up his ears. Presently someone whistled briefly twice. Ryukichi replied. Sumiko looked out of the hut and saw the broad-featured face of Kanji peeping out from behind a tree. He limped over to the hut. Behind him came a broad-shouldered man in a stained army tunic.

"What are *you* doing here?" said Kanji brusquely to Sumiko. "Now then, Sugino, out with her!"

Sugino bared his teeth in mock anger and seized her by the collar.

"Stop it," said Sumiko. "I heard a police car down there in the valley just now. . . ."

"They've gone," said Sugino, releasing her.

"But suppose the police did come, what would you do?" Kanji quizzed her.

Sumiko smiled, wrinkling her little nose.

"I'd pick up the duplicator and dash up the hill . . . and hide with it in a crevice in the rock. The police would be afraid to follow me there at night."

"Sounds brave enough," said Kanji winking to Sugino. "We'll see whether those words will be backed up by deeds."

They had brought some urgent work. A few days earlier the pupils of an elementary school in a village north of the town had been induced without their parents' knowledge to donate their blood for the wounded foreign soldiers brought in from the Korean front. The prefecture committee of the Communist Party had already put out a leaflet protesting against the incident. Kanji had brought the text of an appeal to the villagers not to give their blood to the imperialists.

While Ryukichi was copying out the text of the appeal, Sumiko took a piece of charcoal and a sheet of cardboard and sketched the figure of a little girl with a schoolbag over her shoulder. The little girl had big round eyes and a fringe on her forehead; she looked remarkably like the wax figure Sumiko had seen in the shop window on the main street of the town. Sumiko added a hypodermic needle piercing the little girl's arm with a rubber tube extending from it.

"Splendid!" said Kanji's voice behind her. "So Sumiko knows how to draw!"

She quickly covered her drawing with her hand, but Kanji snatched it away from her.

"Very good indeed. . . . But you'd better give her legs, or else she'll look too much like a disembodied spirit."

"Draw a bottle for the blood," advised Sugino. "And make it a big one."

"Just a minute!" said Kanji as an idea struck him. "I've got it. . . . Not a bottle, but. . . . Where is the blood going to? What is it for?"

"For the war in Korea," said Ryukichi.

"That's just it. You need something to convey that idea at a glance."

"Sumi-chan is very good at drawing aeroplanes," ventured Ryukichi. Sugino shook his head.

"No, that won't do. You'd have to stretch the rubber tube up into the air and then you'd have the aeroplane flying and the girl standing still."

"The aeroplane can be standing on the ground," objected Ryukichi.

"I know. . . ." cried Sumiko. She drew three circles, ran a wavy line around them and added a semi-circular turret on top, with the muzzle of a gun sticking out.

"A tank!" Kanji said, clapping his hands. "Good for you, Sumi-chan."

"An American Sherman to the life," confirmed Sugino.

Sumiko extended the tube from the hypodermic to the tank.

"Good. Now copy it neatly on this," said Kanji, laying a stencil and a stylo in front of her. "But be careful not to spoil it, or I'll wring your little neck."

"We ought to print the appeal first. The leaflet they brought over yesterday can wait," said Ryukichi. "We haven't much paper left. There won't be enough for the drawing, I'm afraid."

"You needn't print the drawing, we'll only make a stencil of it," said Kanji. "I'll show it to Tsumoto."

Sumiko laid the stencil on a board and set to work, while the men busied themselves printing the appeal. When they had finished, Kanji wrapped up the sheets and the stencil and went off with Sugino.

Ryukichi made a fire in the remnants of the stove and stood a pot on it; it was a soup made of burdock stalks and fern shoots. Lacking rice, they ate it with stale biscuits smelling of mice.

"Mmm, delicious soup," said Sumiko, closing her eyes and slapping herself on the cheeks in appreciation. "The most delicious food I've ever tasted."

After supper they sat down to print the leaflet. Sumiko glanced at the first printed sheet and looked up in surprise. It bore the hokku about the Americans and the butterflies with an explanatory note.

"Didn't you say Yasaku wrote this?" she asked.

Ryukichi nodded. "So he did."

"Then why is it signed Katsu Gengo?"

"Because it's a good hokku. That's why it was decided to make a leaflet out of it. We'll post them up wherever we can."

"So Yasaku. . . ." Sumiko clucked her tongue. "I never thought. . . . The other day I saw a poster on the road, it had children on it and aeroplanes carrying the Picadon. It was also signed Katsu Gengo. So Yasaku. . . . knows how to draw as well?"

"A poster? Is that the one entitled 'Fight the War Danger?' No, that's not Yasaku. That one came from the Youth League. They made nearly a hundred in one night and posted them up themselves."

"So it wasn't Yasaku's? But why was it signed Katsu Gengo?"

"Why? Because it was a good drawing. That's why they also decided to print it and post it up."

"Remember the time we went to town and saw that notice on the telephone pole about a puppet show. . . . The play they advertised was by Katsu Gengo."

"Mariko Kuroda wrote that one. That's the girl in the glasses you saw at the meeting in the school-teacher's house. Now she is writing a play for the paper theatre about the Tokiwa miners' wives and their brave fight."

"Tell me about it."

"Their husbands declared a sit-down strike. They stayed in the mine and wouldn't let anyone down there. The mine-owner called out the police and sent strikebreakers into the pit. The scabs loaded the wagonettes with coal but when they tried to cart it away the miners' wives sat down on the track and wouldn't let them pass. They sat there until the mine-owner came to terms."

"They sat it out and won their point," Sumiko murmured. "As brave as the men."

When they finished the work, they extinguished the lamp and sat down to rest in the doorway. A big round moon came up over the mountain. The spire of a pagoda looking like a pine tree without branches pointed skywards near the tip of Monastery Hill. Down below they could see glow-worms flickering among the trees.

"A student choir from Tokyo came to town the other day," said Ryukichi. "They sang lots of fine songs, Japanese and foreign ones as well. I liked the Russian songs, especially one about a young man and his sweetheart. . . ."

He looked at Sumiko. She was pinching her neck.

A glow-worm darted between them.

"Time to go home," said Sumiko. "It's going to rain soon."

A cicada in a bush somewhere above their heads set up a loud, monotonous chirping.

"There's an old song I once had a gramophone record of," said Ryukichi softly. "It's sung by a geisha girl. It says that the cicada always sings of its love, but never dies of love, while the glow-worm suffers in silence and burns itself out. . . ."

He laid his hand meaningly on his breast.

"It's time to go home," said Sumiko hastily.

They walked silently down the hillside. When they reached the rock that resembled a dolphin with upraised tail, Ryukichi said good-bye to Sumiko and turned back. She waited until he had climbed up the hill and was hidden behind the trees, then called out after him: "A few weeks ago someone left a sprig of plum-blossom on our fence. I wonder who it could have been. . . ."

And from behind the azalea bushes came his reply: "The glow-worm!" Sumiko laughed and ran down the path.

3

On Sunday morning the blood-collectors came again. The red motor-car with the loud-speaker drove slowly through the streets, summoning the villagers to the common. Sumiko's uncle and Ineko's father set out for the meeting place.

A loud knocking on the window frame startled Sumiko. She leapt up and opened the shutter. Sugino was standing at the garden fence, a canvas cape thrown over his shoulders.

"You'd better come early today," he said. "Last night the police raided the settlement over at the dam and Eastern Village and seized all the copies of the magazine and the leaflets they could find. There's some urgent work to be done. Don't fail to come."

Sumiko pursed her lips like Yaeko and eyed Sugino sternly.

"How can you be so careless—it was a good thing Uncle wasn't home. You all but broke the window."

Glancing over his shoulder, Sugino produced from the folds of the cape a leaflet and a little pot of paste. Unhurriedly he spread some of the paste on the edges of the slip of paper and stuck it on the fence.

"Oh, do be careful!" Sumiko hissed. "You'll be caught!"

Sugino winked at her.

"We got this leaflet from town yesterday—it was printed there. We've pasted it up all along the highway and in the villages too. Well, we'll be expecting you."

He handed her one of the leaflets and he turned away from the fence. She slipped the sheet of paper into her sleeve and closed the shutter. A little later she heard voices out in the street, and peeping through a hole, saw a group of women reading the leaflet.

Sumiko extracted the crumpled bit of paper from her sleeve and had just laid it on the mat with the intention of straightening it out when she heard footsteps at the door. Quickly she hid the leaflet under her knees. The door opened and her uncle stopped at the threshold, arms akimbo and a dark scowl on his face.

"I have to go and see the doctor," Sumiko said. "He told me to come today."

Her uncle took off his sandals in silence and sat down in front of her.

"I've just found out everything from that woman from the city," he said. "It turns out you've been lying to me—you've only been to the hospital once." He shook his head and his voice rose to a squeaking falsetto. "I know everything! Only yesterday the police caught your friend Yaeko sticking up leaflets near the school. After they questioned her they took her home to her father, who gave her such a thrashing that she's still lying in the backyard unable to get up. Got mixed up with the Reds, see? You've probably done the same. Speak up! What are you hiding there? Give it here!"

Sumiko leaned forward with her hands on her knees, but her uncle pushed her away and seized the slip of paper that was now exposed.

"This is it!" He nodded to himself. "It's all over the place. Where did you get it?"

"Somebody threw it in the window. I don't know who it was."

"It's a lie!" He pulled out the long pipe he had stuck under his sash and raised it to hit her. "Where have you been going all these evenings when you were supposed to be at the doctor's?"

Sumiko covered her head with her hands.

"Speak up!"

He struck her on the hand with the pipe, but not too hard. Then he seized her by the hair and pulled. Sumiko threw herself face down on the mat.

"You've been going to those meetings and listening to that leader of theirs. . . . That one," he said, jabbing the leaflet with his pipe. "That must be their leader, the one who signs all their leaflets and posters. But they'll soon catch him, you may be sure. Now who gave it to you, eh?"

But before she could answer he struck her on the back with his pipe.

"Do you know that leader? Have you ever seen him? You might as well speak up because he'll be nabbed soon enough. Well? Are you going to talk or do you want a beating!"

She lay with her face buried in the mat and her head covered with her hands expecting the blow. But no blow came. After a while she stealthily uncovered one eye and saw her uncle sitting with his eyes closed, pipe in hand, waiting for her to answer.

In front of her lay a square sheet of paper with a drawing on it. Sumiko moved her head slightly. It was a drawing of a little girl with a school satchel over her shoulder, a hypodermic needle in her arm and a rubber tube running from the hypodermic to a tank. Beside it was the inscription: "Not one drop of blood for the invaders! Defend the peace!" And underneath, the signature: "Katsu Gengo."

Sumiko opened her eyes wide. There it was: Katsu Gengo. She pressed her sleeve to her flushed cheeks.

"Who is that Katsu Gengo?" her uncle shouted. "Do you know him? Speak!"

She raised her head, sat up and laid her hands on her knees.

"Answer, or I'll beat you black and blue!" He pointed to the photographs standing on the altar-shelf. "Ask your parents for forgiveness. You shameless one!"

Sumiko looked him straight in the eyes.

"I have done nothing wrong and I have nothing to be ashamed of," she said.

"Wha-at!" His mouth dropped open and he choked with rage. "How dare you defy your elders, you hussy!"

He swung his arm to strike, but this time she did not cover her head with her hands; she continued to sit with her head held high.

Her uncle's hand remained poised in mid-air. Slowly he dropped it.

"Lucky for you that you are sick. Otherwise I would beat you within an inch of your life. If you won't speak up, you won't. But you will regret it. From today you will not move a step from this house without me."

He lit his pipe and stretched himself out on his back. Sumiko sat motionless, her eyes glued to the leaflet.

They had used the same stencil, only the inscription had been added. Who could have written it? It was not Ryukichi's writing. Then whose? Kan-chan or Sugino perhaps? Or someone from town? The four hieroglyphs on the tank which stood for "Imperialism" had been written by Yae-chan. She could vouch for that. The curlicue on the first character was unmistakably Yae-chan's. And in the upper right-hand corner there was a dark blotch—a thumb print evidently left by the one who had laid the stencil on the frame. Careless! Thank goodness it was too blurred for anyone to be able to recognize the thumb print. Just the same they ought to be more careful. They must have seen it on the proof, and they ought to have scraped it carefully off the stencil or else held a lighted match to the spot to level it off. But they had been in such a hurry they hadn't bothered. Too bad. . . .

Her uncle crumpled the leaflet and thrust it into his sash.

"That leader will soon be caught and turned over to the Amis," he said viciously. "They'll squeeze it all out of him . . . he'll give them the names of all his accomplices, and they'll round them all up. You too. And don't expect any mercy!"

He sat up, grimacing with pain and rubbed his shoulder. Sumiko went over, seated herself beside him and began silently to massage his shoulder and back.

"Everybody has gone off to give their blood," she murmured. "They're paying for it this time."

Her uncle snorted.

"Pay for it! Not they! Instead of money they give out dyed chicken feathers to wear on your chest. A badge of honour. Faugh! That's why nobody wants to give his blood. People just stand round and gape. Only two servant girls from the Sakuma estate gave their blood. . . . Soon they'll be going around the houses begging for it."

"Will they come here too?"

"No. My blood is no good, and they're afraid to use yours."

"So nobody wants to give any blood?" said Sumiko, kneading his back expertly. "They must have read the leaflet."

Her uncle shot an angry look at her, shook her hand off his back and lay down again.

"I shan't let you go anywhere any more. And I won't let anyone in here either. If that Yaeko comes here I'll wring her neck. . . . When you need to go to the doctor I'll take you myself."

"Doctor Arimitsu said he won't give me any treatment without the permission of the Amis. That's because of that brass tag. Does Uncle want to drag me to the Amis?"

He did not reply. Folding his hands under his head he closed his eyes.

"Sumi-chan!" called Ineko from the yard. "Sumi-chan!"

Her uncle got up and went over to the door.

"Sumiko has committed a grave offence and she will sit home in punishment. You will not talk to her any more!" And with that he slammed the door.

4

She was not allowed to sit by the window, or even to go near it. The window had to be tightly closed all the time. She could go outside only to do the laundry, wash dishes and attend to the other household chores, but to talk to anyone was forbidden. She was not allowed to go outside the fence without her uncle. Together they went to work in the Sakuma vegetable and rice fields. And when Sumiko went for water down to the valley, her uncle sat on the hill above the reservoir and watched her.

The rains came and life in captivity became altogether unendurable. One night, as she was sitting by the door mending her uncle's straw rain cape, she heard clucking and chirping noises behind the fence. Her uncle was not in sight. But at once Ineko's mother poked her head over the fence to see what was going on: her uncle had asked Ineko's mother and grandmother to keep an eye on Sumiko while he was away.

Sometimes Ineko would peep over the fence. Silently she would touch her eyes with her sleeve, go through the motions of wringing out the sleeve, and point her finger at her chest. This pantomime was intended to convey

that she too had been forbidden to leave the house and that she often found relief in tears. But somehow she managed to maintain contact with the outside world. Seizing a moment when Sumiko's uncle was engaged in buying salt from a pedlar, she threw a piece of paper screwed into a tight little ball at Sumiko's feet.

The note had been scribbled hastily in pencil and all the letters leaned to one side.

"We are all very sorry for you and Ine-chan," she read. "We have put out another issue of *Our Land* and the second issue of *The Helmsman* will be out soon. We have had greetings from Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and many other places. We are all very much upset by the sad fate of Yae-chan. Her father was tricked by Sanata, the Badger, into putting his mark on a paper asking the Badger to adopt Yae-chan. The Badger had promised him money, but afterwards he refused. He said Yae-chan was no good—she has a scar on her back. He sold her to work in the canning factory which is now working on an American order—making containers for napalm bombs. Yae-chan lives in the factory hostel; she and the other working girls are kept under lock and key and after work their clothes are hidden from them. Yae-chan has been sold for six years. We are going to get in touch with her." (Here several letters had been blotted out.) "The police searched the house of Akagi, the school-teacher, they turned everything upside down, even tore the tiles off the roof. But Grandad and the teacher managed to get away in time. The police are out to arrest them on a charge of anti-American propaganda.

"We are going to have an excursion to the hills to gather ferns soon. The young people from all the settlements and mountain villages are coming. The blood donation campaign in our area was a complete failure. Katsu Gengo has been very energetic—in the past five days he has made over a hundred big posters, printed six-hundred leaflets, composed and printed three pamphlets and posted leaflets up in all the neighbouring villages. In five days, think of that! Isn't he wonderful! That's because he has a thousand hands just like the Goddess Senju-kannon.

"I am terribly worried about you. I have passed your house many times both day and night" (here again several letters were illegible), "through the little hole in the window" (more blots). "The cicada near our hut sings all the time" (several more smudges).

"Don't pinch your neck. Forgive the foul handwriting. Greetings. Your glow-worm."

5

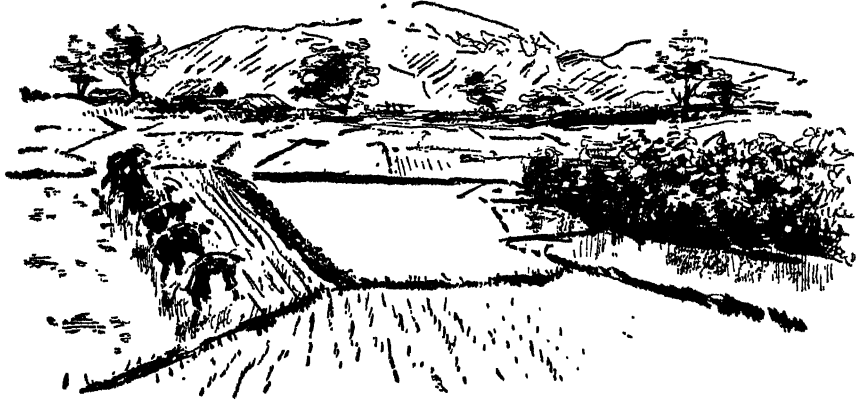
At the height of the rainy season the rice planting began. The warm rain poured down from morning till night, flooding the fields until only the grass that grew on the boundary strips was visible above the water. The peasants worked in the fields all days long, for the planting had to be completed before the hot weather set in.

Standing knee-deep in water, they worked with their matlocks digging small holes for the slender stalks. There was no end to the work, for as soon as the rain subsided and the water drained off the hillside, the peasants had to straighten the fallen seedlings and even out the rows again. They toiled from dawn till dusk.

From constant immersion in the water their legs swelled and itched. Yellow leeches with black stripes stuck to their ankles and calves. In

pulling off the leeches they scratched the skin till it bled, and then they caught frogs and pressed them against the scratches to ease the itching.

The rice planting was finished in good time before the rains stopped. When the work was done, all those who worked on the landlord's land were invited to the estate. The men washed up first in two huge wooden troughs placed in the courtyard near the granary, and when they were through, the



women changed the water and washed themselves. Then they all gathered in the kitchen, sitting down in several rows in a semi-circle in front of the stove. An old servant placed a handful of rice seedlings on a shelf over the stove, poured *saké* on them and sprinkled flour over them, and then bowed low—an entreaty to the deities to bless the rice that had just been planted and to bestow well-being and prosperity on landlord Sakuma and everybody else who was present at this thanksgiving ceremony. Trays with flasks of *saké* and bowls of tea were placed in front of the guests, each of whom was served with a portion of cold noodles and a tin of preserved seaweed in sweet sauce.

The effects of the drink soon made themselves felt. Sumiko's uncle clapped his hands and shouted: "Kora sassa-sa-sa, korya, korya!" Heiske and several other young men began to dance on the earthen floor, waving their arms and slapping themselves on the thighs. They too were quite drunk.

By the time the feasting was over, Sumiko's uncle was fast asleep between two barrels of rice, and Sumiko had some difficulty in waking him up and inducing him to go home. As soon as they reached the house, he flopped down on his mat without bothering to undress and was snoring in a few minutes.

As she was hanging up their sandals on the gate-post to dry, Sumiko saw someone peeping over the neighbour's fence. It was Ineko.

"Come here, quickly!" she called in a hoarse whisper. "There's nobody at home. They've all gone to Kuhei's and Grandmother is asleep. Sumichan, something awful has happened!"

"What is it?"

Ineko covered her face with her hands and began to sob. Sumiko went over to her and shook her.

"Stop crying at once and tell me what it is!"

But Ineko continued to weep. "They keep us here like prisoners," she sobbed. "And all sorts of things are happening outside. . . ."

"Hush! For goodness' sake tell me what's happened!"

Ineko dried her eyes and whispered her ill tidings through the fence.

"The day before the rice planting began everyone went to Hunchback and Tunnel hills to pick ferns and on the way back through Monkey Forest they found a barbed wire fence in their path. The boys started tearing down the fence, when the police and two Ami soldiers arrived. The police attacked the boys with their clubs. There was a regular skirmish. Sugino wanted to interfere but the police seized him and threw him into a lorry. The Amis helped the police to arrest several other boys. Yesterday the village Elder said the police were going to raid all the villages and hill settlements in the area to round up all the Reds. They want them all to go the same way as Yasuji and Toshio did last year."

"That means Ryu-chan and Yasaku are also in danger," said Sumiko, her fingers straying to her neck. "And all the others too. . . ."

Ineko slid down to the ground and beat her head against the fence in despair. "And we sit here in this prison . . . cut off from everything . . . everything!"

Sumiko too pressed her face against her side of the fence, weeping silently.

6

During the night it rained heavily and the wind rose. Sumiko was awakened by the loud patter of the raindrops against the paper window panes. She went outside and took the sandals off the gate-post. When she came back she could not fall asleep for a long time. Her swollen feet ached and the itching began in her shoulder.

She must have dozed off, for some time later she awoke with a start to hear a chirping and whistling through the rustle of the rain. She crept over to the window and put her eye to the peep-hole, but could see nothing. The whistling was repeated. Carefully she moved aside the shutter. A gust of wind blew into the room. She saw a figure enveloped in a rain cape over by the fence.

"It's me . . . Matao," said a hoarse voice. "Can you come to the mountain tomorrow? There's heaps of work to be done."

"Where's Ryu-chan? Have they arrested him?"

"No, he has gone to town for some other work. We must carry on with the printing. The Amis have started building something on the road. Looks as if they're going to enlarge their base."

"I daren't leave the house. . . . My uncle won't let me."

Just then her uncle gave a loud snore and stirred in his sleep. Sumiko froze by the window and her hand flew to her mouth.

"So you're going to sit with your hands folded because you're afraid to disobey your uncle? I thought you had more spirit than that. . . ." Matao made a gesture of disgust. "I always said women weren't any good for this work."

With that he turned away and vanished into the darkness. Sumiko closed the shutter and lay down again, burying her face in the pillow. A cock crowed sleepily in the distance. And suddenly the roaring of aero-

planes tore into the early morning stillness. They were flying so low that they seemed just above the roof. Sumiko's uncle stopped snoring, muttered and scratched himself. He was evidently awake. Sumiko looked over toward the window and saw that day was breaking. The rain still poured down.

"Uncle," she said softly, "I have to go to the doctor. It hurts."

"What hurts? Are there any spots?" her uncle inquired in concern, raising himself on his elbow.

"My shoulder aches, and my legs, and my insides ache too. I can't stand it any more. . . ."

"Very well, I'll take you tomorrow."

"I shall go alone."

"No, you shan't. Go to sleep now. We'll go together in the morning."

Sumiko sat up on her quilt.

"When are you going to let me go out by myself? I can't stand being cooped up like this any longer . . . like a prisoner or something."

"What nonsense is this? You must be dreaming. . . . Now go back to sleep."

"I can't stand it, I tell you, I have to go tomorrow by myself. Give me my sandals, please."

"Go to sleep!" shouted her uncle. "And keep quiet or I'll slap you."

"I'll go in my bare feet then."

"Keep quiet!" Her uncle banged his fist on the mat.

Sumiko got up and put her kimono on over her night robe.

"Lie down at once!" stormed her uncle. "I'll give you a good thrashing!"

Paying no heed to his threats, Sumiko put on her trousers and combed her hair. Her uncle jumped up and slapped her face. She swayed a little, but kept her balance and walked over to the door.

"Where are you going? Are you mad?"

He caught her by the sleeve, but she tore herself out of his grasp and went out barefoot into the yard. Her uncle picked up the bamboo rake and looked out. Sumiko was sitting in the middle of the little yard on the wet ground, her legs crossed under her and her hands resting in her lap.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" He swung the rake. "Get inside at once and lie down. You will get ill . . . and die."

She raised her head and uttered in clear, distinct tones:

"Sumiko will sit here without moving . . . until her uncle permits her to go out of the house alone."

His jaw dropped and he stared at her speechless with amazement. In the dim light of early morning he scrutinized her face: her mouth was set in an obstinate line, her eyes were closed. Her hair was already wet.

"Go home, you will be soaked," he said gently. "Don't be a fool."

Sumiko wiped her face with her sleeve and straightened the collar of her kimono.

"You won't?"

He stamped his foot and hurled the rake at her. It struck her on the knee. She winced, but did not move, and remained sitting motionless as a statue with her hands in her lap. He took his rain cape off the nail and threw it to her. She caught it and covered her shoulders with it, straightened her kimono and laid her hands in her lap again.

"You're soaking already," he said with concern. "You'll catch your death of cold. Come inside."

She shook her head silently.

"Very well then, you can sit there until you rot!" And he slammed the door.

7

As the morning wore on the rain abated; but the sky did not clear up and the heavy dark clouds threatened more rain. Her uncle came out of the house, washed himself at the rain-water barrel and, without looking in her direction, growled: "Go inside and have your breakfast."

She did not reply. He went into the house, leaving the door open. Soon he reappeared, poured the water out of the cooking pot and filled it with fresh water.

"Where's the salt?" he asked.

"In the jar on the top shelf," replied Sumiko. "There's a bottle of liquid soap next to it. Take care not to upset it."

Her uncle came out into the yard several times—he washed some salted radishes, rinsed out the bowl and the cooking pot, and brushed his trousers, but he did not address Sumiko any more. After a while he put on his umbrella-hat, threw a piece of matting over his shoulders and tucking his sickle into his belt he went out of the gate.

The rain stopped. Sumiko took off the rain cape, laid it on the wet ground and stood up to stretch her legs. She took a little walk in the yard, and peeped into the house. The bottle of liquid soap stood in its place on the shelf—her uncle had not upset it. She went back to the yard and seated herself on the rain cape, facing the house.

Presently she heard the gate creak behind her and a man's voice asked:

"Is Kuni-san at home?"

"No, he has gone out," Sumiko answered without turning her head.

She heard a discreet cough and the sound of receding footsteps. Over by the rain-water barrel in the corner of the yard a little frog hopped about. The birds in a tree in the neighbour's yard set up a loud chirping. A pleasant smell of cooking was wafted from the neighbour's house. They must be frying something on bean oil. Sumiko's mouth watered. Her hair had dried and her trousers, which had clung unpleasantly to her legs, began to dry too. High up in the sky a flock of wild geese flew over in perfect V-formation.

Sumiko heard someone call her name. It was Ineko's grandmother.

"Is your uncle in?"

"No, he's gone out," she replied gazing up at the sky.

"What on earth are you doing? Praying?"

There was a whispering behind the fence. Then Ineko's voice asked:

"Sumi-chan, what are you doing? Why are you sitting there?"

"I told my uncle I am going to sit here until he lets me go out alone,"

Sumiko replied without turning round.

Ineko squealed delightedly and clapped her hands.

"Oh, how wonderful! How wonderful! When did you begin?"

"Last night."

She again heard a whispering on the other side of the fence, and then a paper bag flew over the fence into her yard. Sumiko took the rake and

pulled the bag toward her. It contained millet-meal dumplings and two pickled plums. She ate the offering with gratitude and zest.

Presently there was a slight commotion behind the fence and Sumiko heard the wrathful voice of Ineko's father and the sound of someone's ears being boxed.

"Sumi-chan!" came Ineko's muffled shout, "I'm doing the same. . . ."

Her voice broke off and Sumiko heard her being dragged into the house. She stared up at the sky. Clouds were moving over from the direction of the sea. That meant more rain soon. Some small boys ran past the house with a kite. Presently her legs began to go numb. She straightened out one leg and started to rub it vigorously when she heard voices and quickly resumed her position.

"What she needs is a good beating!" said a man's voice. "That would knock some of the nonsense out of her head. Come away from there!"

Sumiko began counting each time she took a breath. She had counted up to one hundred and twenty-three when the gate banged and her uncle appeared. He came over to her and whispered in her ear:

"Come into the house, there's a good girl. You are disgracing me before the whole village. Everyone is laughing."

She did not reply.

"Come home, I tell you," her uncle whispered desperately. "Are you hungry?"

"I am not going to eat anything," she replied firmly. "I shall die of starvation."

Her uncle went into the house.

"The girl must be mad!" she heard a woman's voice from behind the fence.

"She's been sitting there since last night. The shameless hussy!"

"Silly ass! Picadon!" cried the little boys.

A bit of dirt struck Sumiko on the cheek. Other missiles hit her on the back and on the head.

"Get away from there!" she heard Ineko's mother shout.

The boys ran away. Sumiko wiped her face and hair with her sleeve. She counted another ninety-three. The gate opened and Kuhei's wife came in.

"Kuni-san," she said to Sumiko's uncle. "Forgive her, she's a sick girl after all."

Sumiko heard her uncle say something in an angry voice.

"A hard-hearted man," muttered Kuhei's wife. She went over to Sumiko. "You shouldn't be obstinate," she urged. "It isn't nice. Ask your uncle to forgive you."

"I have done nothing wrong," said Sumiko.

"Now, go in like a good girl. You must obey your uncle."

She stood for a while clucking her tongue in concern and finally went away.

8

The news of Sumiko's defiance spread quickly through the village and a small crowd of curious onlookers soon gathered outside the house to discuss the unusual event. Some pitied the girl, holding the view that she must have had good cause to take such a drastic step; others abused her and opined that a good thrashing would put some sense into her head.

At first Sumiko listened to the talk, but soon she lost interest. Presently it began raining again and some of the spectators went away, but since the buzz of talk still continued Sumiko concluded that a few hardy spirits had remained. She covered her head with the rain cape, but after a while she took it off and laid it under her, since the puddle in the corner of the yard was gradually spreading out in her direction.

"Move over to the tree, Sumi-chan," Ineko's grandmother advised.

Just then a paper parcel fell at Sumiko's feet. This time it contained a few potatoes and some slices of salted radish. The puddle had reached her cape by now. Sumiko began counting again, but could not keep it up. She started all over again, but each time she lost count. Then she tried repeating her multiplication tables. She had reached seven times eight, when her uncle came out.

"Now, that's enough. Come home," he said in a calm voice. "You will get ill."

"Give me my sandals," she said.

He went over, seized her by the collar and dragged her toward the house. She struggled violently and fell on to the ground. Her uncle struck her on the cheek and continued dragging her over the mud. At the threshold she broke away from him, but he gave her a kick and she fell right into the puddle. He seized the rake and began beating her over the back.

"Stop it, stop it!" a woman screamed. "He'll kill her!"

"Beating her like a dog, poor thing," said another. "Take care, or that fever of hers will start and then you'll be sorry."

"Mind your own business!" roared Sumiko's uncle. "Get away from here!"

The women all started shouting at once. They called Sumiko's uncle a brute and a savage. Someone suggested going to the Elder or calling a policeman. Her uncle dropped the rake and stalked away into the house. Sumiko got up, picked up the straw cape and the rake and took up a position further away from the puddle.

"Better get away from here," she heard a man's voice urging the crowd. "It's not our business. As long as she has an audience she'll stick it out. But if we go away, she'll give in."

"That's right, let us not interfere," said another man. "She must be soaking wet by now. She won't be able to stand it much longer."

The onlookers dispersed. Sumiko began counting again, but she could not keep it up. The figures would not stay in her head. She was tired of pinching her neck and she tried massaging her legs. After a while her uncle opened the door.

"It's going to start pouring in a minute. You're sure to catch cold," he said gently. "Come inside. It's for your own good. You are my daughter, aren't you?" His mouth twisted and he wiped his eyes. "I don't want you to get into trouble. . . . I vowed to your parents to take care of you. . . ."

He went over to her and wiped her hair with his hand.

"You shouldn't be so obstinate. I'm very fond of you, and that's why I try to keep you out of trouble. Those Reds will ruin you." He bent over to her. "Now come in and have something to eat and go to bed."

Sumiko looked at him in silence and shook her head. Seeing that it was no use trying to persuade her, he took a scarf out of his kimono and laid it on her head. Then he turned and went back into the house.

Sumiko clenched her teeth, closed her eyes and tried counting again. It was beginning to get dark. The rain was subsiding. Presently she heard a muffled voice behind her.

"Sumiko-san, what is the matter with you?" She recognized the voice of Takami. "What has happened?"

She put her fingers in her ears.

"Go away," she said. "I am not going to die. I'm going to get well."

Her uncle opened the door and looked up at the sky. He said something, but Sumiko had her fingers in her ears and she did not hear him. By now it was quite dark. The rain had turned to a fine drizzle. Sumiko glanced around but there was no one at the fence; everyone had gone. There was no sign of Ine-chan; she must be locked up too. Sumiko noticed a small package lying beside the rake. Someone had thrown it when her eyes had been closed. She opened it and found a small box wrapped in waxed paper; it was full of white pills. She put several in her mouth. They had a sourish-sweet taste and smelt like medicine. There was something written on the box but it was too dark to read the letters. Her uncle did not light the lamp, evidently he had not been able to find the matches. They were in the chaff box on the bottom shelf.

There was a faint rustle behind the fence. Sumiko started. Her uncle must have gone to bed. She was all alone in the dark. Someone might come into the yard and seize her. Or else a werewolf or a ghost might appear. Again that rustling! Sumiko shivered and pressing the fingers of her left hand against her right palm she intoned in a rapid whisper: "Marishiten Monjubosatsu." The rustling ceased at once. And suddenly she heard a low voice in the darkness:

"Good girl, Sumi-chan! Stick it out!"

A straw rain cape dropped beside her, followed by a large paper bag. She heard footsteps receding. She picked up the cape and threw it over her head. Inside the bag she found a piece of fried fish, some rice balls and several sweets. She ate everything up and slapped herself on the cheeks with pleasure. Then she went over to the rain-water barrel and drank some water from the wooden ladle. It had not been Ryu-chan, that was not his voice. Then who could it have been? Matao, perhaps? Or Kan-chan? She had not recognized the voice.

She heard the sound of a car being started somewhere not far away. She listened for a long while but she heard nothing more. Evidently the car had turned back in the direction of the highway. Presently footsteps sounded at the gate and someone whispered:

"She's still sitting there."

"She'll sit till tomorrow. A tough little thing."

"No wonder she survived that time."

They laughed and passed on. A light went on inside the house. The door opened and her uncle appeared.

"Go to bed," he said in a sleepy voice. "We'll talk this over tomorrow."

"No, I shall sit here all night," she replied in a hoarse voice. "And all day tomorrow as well. And the day after. . . ."

She tried to straighten the cape which had slipped off her head and suddenly fell over on to her side. She picked herself up with difficulty. After a while her uncle came out again. He shuffled over to her through the mud and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"All right, that's enough. I forgive you."

"My sandals . . ." she said and sneezed.

"Very well, you shall have them." He patted her shoulder. "But do be careful, mind. It's very dangerous now. They're rounding up everybody."

"I shall go about alone." She sneezed again. "Give me my sandals, please."

"You little fool," he hissed and swung his arm as if to strike her. But instead he threw the bundle he had been carrying at her feet. She opened it up, and found her sandals and stuffed them into the bosom of her kimono. She got up, but her legs gave under her and she fell. Her uncle caught her and helped her to rise. Leaning heavily on the rake, she limped into the house and dropped down on to the earthen floor. As she took her sandals out of her kimono she found the little box with the sourish-sweet pills. She pulled it out and read the inscription on it: "These are good for colds. Please take them. Takami." She swallowed another two.



Her uncle went out to fetch the straw cape on which she had sat. The sky was now bright with stars. He filled his pipe and put a match to it. By the time he returned to the house Sumiko was fast asleep with the rain cape over her head and her sandals under her pillow.

THE RED DRAGON-FLY

1

Sumiko had reached the cemetery on her way to the hut on the hill when a roar of machines at work caused her to stop and look around. Over by the highway she saw machines with tank-like treads ploughing up the earth, machines with shields in front shifting the loose soil, and other machines spreading crushed rock. The work was going on over a wide area, from where the road to the base joined the highway all the way to the round rock near the Jizo statue.

Sumiko ran down to join the crowd of onlookers near the bridge. Several small boys nudged one another and snickered when they saw Sumiko, but she surreptitiously showed them her fist.

A row of houses that had stood among the trees near the rock had disappeared along with the trees. The tenants had been moved into shacks put up not far from the road. American MPs were sitting on benches under canvas awnings near the shacks. In front of them stood a row of Japanese policemen in caps and dark blue uniforms, and with steel helmets fastened to their leather belts.

Sumiko ran down the embankment and, dodging behind the trees, descended into the hollow.

She found Yasaku and the taciturn Heiske in the hut. Yasaku sprang up as she entered, tossed his hair back from his forehead and intoned solemnly:

"Behold these delicate hands that have torn asunder the fetters of a thousand years of slavery! Behold and rejoice! She has won a victory! Congratulate her! My brush is powerless to sing the praises of this valiant maid."

Heiske also grudgingly congratulated her.

"I thought . . . Matao would be here," said Sumiko, thanking them. "He came for me."

Yasaku covered his mouth with his hand and whispered:

"Matao has gone to a meeting in town. Ryukichi too. He said they would spend the night there. Matao will print the second issue of *The Helmsman* tomorrow. They have a duplicator of their own now. We sent Ineko to him with paper and ink."

"Ine-chan?" said Sumiko in surprise. "Is she free too?"

Yasaku threw back his head and laughed.

"As soon as she heard that Sumi-chan had won her points she raised such a rumpus that they simply threw her out of the house. But Yaeko is in a bad way," he said with a sigh. "We can't get in touch with her at all. It is a regular prison there."

"Poor Yae-chan," whispered Sumiko.

Yasaku winked and his sharp nose twitched: "Well, did the rain cape and the food come in handy?"

"So it was Yasaku-san who brought them?" said Sumiko bowing. "Thank you kindly."

He laughed. "You're mistaken. It wasn't me at all." He covered his mouth with his hand again. "It was . . . guess who . . . Katsu Gengo."

Sumiko raised her eyebrows, smiled and bowed again. She went over and looked at the printed sheets. First came a long verse telling of the fight put up by the inhabitants of Uchinada in the Ishikawa prefecture in protest against the building of an American artillery range. The peasants and their wives had sat down on the roads in front of the ammunition lorries. Detachments of workers and students had come from town to help the peasants.

The verse was followed by an article describing how the inhabitants of the tiny island of Oshima near the Kii peninsula, on learning that the Americans were planning to build a radar station on their island, had sat down on the beach, joined hands so as to form solid ranks and kept the Americans from landing. Railwaymen bearing red flags had come to the aid of the Oshima people.

"The Amis have started building something here too," said Sumiko. "They've torn up the highway already."

Yasaku stood up and raised his hand, and began to declaim: "This sudden blow the enemy had dealt us is like a jet of water sprayed into the ear of one who sleeps. But the flame of wrath shall spread—cr—shall envelop the entire land. . . ."

Heiske tittered and bent over the duplicator. Yasaku glanced quickly at Sumiko and, noticing that she too was biting her lips to suppress her laughter, went on in an ordinary voice:

"Remember how Akagi, the school-teacher, warned us at that meeting to be prepared for Enola? Well, it has begun. We shall have to fight."

We'll begin by telling the readers of *Our Land* and *The Helmsman* in verse and stories how the patriots in Uchinada, Oshima and elsewhere are carrying on the fight."

The door opened and Ryukichi entered the hut.

"Sumi-chan!" He paused on the threshold and stared at her, shocked by her appearance. "How thin you have grown! . . . I saw Matao at the meeting, and he told me. . . ."

He wiped his streaming face.

"Ryu-chan does not look so well himself," she said examining him with a quizzical smile. "You're as black as coal. . . ."

Yasaku's nose twitched, giving him a startling resemblance to a fox.

"You said you were going to spend the night in town," he said with a wink at Sumiko. "We weren't expecting you. . . ."

Ryukichi made no reply. He went over to the water barrel and gulped down some water thirstily.

"Have you finished the printing?" he said to Yasaku. "Tsumoto will be here soon."

"Everything but the readers' letters and a list of recommended reading."

"We must insert a death notice. For Takeda Yukio. . . . In memory of a staunch fighter. . . ."

Yasaku leapt up and seized himself by the hair.

"Dead?" Sumiko cried out.

"Killed," said Ryukichi.

He sank down on the straw beside Sumiko, his head drooped on his chest and he heaved a deep sigh. The others stared at him in shocked silence.

2

Yukio had died two weeks before in detention prison. His elder brother, summoned from Niigata by the police, had attended to the cremation and gone away taking the ashes with him. The police had tried to hush up the affair to avoid disturbances in the city.

But the story had leaked out. It turned out that with the knowledge and consent of the prosecuting attorney, Yukio had been taken several times to the CIC division at the base headquarters. What had been done to him there no one knew. Evidently he had shared the fate of Yasuji and Toshio who had died the year before after being interrogated by the CIC, the same fate that had befallen the girl telephone operator Kawakami Asako who had been arrested at the end of the year before last by the secret police and had died shortly afterward. Two former prisoners of war returned from the Soviet Union had died in the same mysterious way in Ishikawa. All of them had been questioned by American Intelligence. And how many more Japanese had died at the hands of the CIC in other parts of the country!

The prison doctor had certified that Yasuji and Toshio had both died of the same disease—pernicious anaemia. Yukio's death had been attributed to the same cause. But why did they all die of the same disease? Why? No one knew. The dead carried their secret with them to the grave. Strange and terrible things were happening in Japan. . . .

"What about Sugino?" Yasaku asked. "Will they kill him too?"

"No. Sugino will be released," replied Ryukichi. "The police have announced that all those who were arrested in the forest skirmish will be released. The Amis don't want any trouble here just now because they have started to enlarge their military base. No one knows whether they'll stop at the round rock or go farther." He paused, then added: "Akagi and Grandad will have to lie very low. The police are hunting for them everywhere. They say the CIC want them. . . ."

As Sumiko prepared to leave, Ryukichi stopped her and said she must not go back alone. The Americans were all over the place, even at night, and it was very dangerous for her to walk alone in the hollow near the highway. She ought to take the other path through the valley at Turtle Hill. But that would mean crossing the gorge over the rope bridge which was no less dangerous at night than meeting the Americans.

After a whispered consultation with Yasaku and Heiske, Ryukichi said: "You had better go by way of the hollow. Heiske will go with you. But I should like to have a word with you first. . . ." He signed to her and they stepped out of the hut together.

"Look here," he began, coughing nervously. "I want you to listen carefully to what I have to say. Things are going to get very serious, from now on we are beginning to fight in real earnest. It will be very dangerous. So, perhaps it would be better . . . if you . . ." he hesitated, obviously at a loss. "You see, the police will be after us, and anyone they catch may be turned over to the CIC. And they don't handle you with kid gloves there you know—they will do everything they can to make you talk. But you must not open your mouth, must not utter a single word no matter what they do to you. You must not even tell them your name. You must be dumb from first to last. Understand?"

Sumiko nodded.

"The work will be dangerous now," Ryukichi repeated. "If you fall into the hands of the Amis you must be prepared for anything. It will be hard even for men to endure it. So you had better think it over carefully. Perhaps, Sumi-chan will stay out of it . . . just for a time. It will be better that way."

She threw him a look of hurt reproach.

"Then Ryu-chan . . ." she began, but he interrupted her.

"That does not mean that we doubt Sumi-chan's courage. Not at all. But if the Americans got her in their clutches, she might break down under the strain. That's why I thought, for the time being. . . ."

"Then Ryu-chan . . ." her voice broke. She turned her back on him, pressed her sleeve to her face. Her shoulders were shaking with sobs.

"Sumi-chan, you must not take it like that," he said laying his hand on her shoulder. "It's only that I am afraid for you. . . ."

She threw herself face down on the grass, weeping bitterly. Two heads looked out of the hut. Ryukichi squatted on his heels beside Sumiko and whispered:

"I've spoken to Kan-chan about it. He agrees with me. . . ."

Sumiko only sobbed the louder. Yasaku came out of the hut.

"Hush! They'll hear you down there . . ." he whispered.

The sobbing ceased at once. She lay for a while motionless. Then she got up, brushed the dust off her trousers and trotted off down the hill without another word. Ryukichi ran after her and caught her by the

arm. She tore herself loose and turned to face him, her breast heaving, trembling in every limb.

"How can Ryu-chan and Kan-chan believe that those Amis could make me talk!" she said breathlessly. "Who was it that made an orphan and a . . . a cripple of me?" She pointed to her shoulder. "I would let them tear me to pieces before I'd utter a word. I . . . I . . ."

Tears choked her and she raised her hand to her throat. Her cheeks were wet. She saw Heiske approaching and quickly brushed away her tears.

"Let's go!" Heiske said gruffly and passed on.

"I thought Ryu-chan was clever," she said, tossing her head with a sob. "But Ryu-chan is a fool!"

He dropped his eyes and said in a barely audible voice:

"Yes, I am a fool."

"The greatest fool in the world!" she stamped her foot and ran off after Heiske.

They descended the hill and followed the road past the reservoir and the embankment. Beyond the embankment a row of new posts had been put up. They stood out sharply in the beam of a spotlight mounted on the roof of the shack nearest the road. One of the posts bore a large sign in English and Japanese: KEEP OUT!

"They've closed the road," muttered Heiske. "Now we'll have to go all the way around through Kurotani to get to town. It's three times as far."

A Japanese policeman appeared on the highway. He wore his helmet over his eyes like an American MP and he carried a club. He swaggered down the road, stopped by the new sign-post, set his legs wide apart and stood there twirling his club behind his back in approved Yankee fashion.

3

The village Elder and the chairman of the village council had seen a Foreign Office official from Tokyo and submitted a petition on behalf of the inhabitants of three villages, protesting against the closing of the road leading to the town. The official had promised to pass on the petition to the department concerned.

So said an announcement posted on the bulletin board at the entrance to the village council in the Old Village. But that was only half the story.

A day later the whole story was told in leaflets entitled: "Bulletin No. 1 put out by *Our Land* and *The Helmsman* magazines" which appeared on the wall of the village council, on the fences in all three villages and on telegraph poles and trees throughout the whole neighbourhood.

What the Tokyo official had actually said, proclaimed the Bulletin, was this: The territory up to the round rock had been included in the zone of the Camp Enola artillery range from the very beginning. The contract granting the Americans territory for an artillery range provided for the possibility of such additional building work as might be required to ensure the safety of the local population. Such additional work might entail certain alterations in the boundaries of Camp Enola.

"This," the Bulletin declared, "translated into simple language means that the Americans have decided to expand their military base. This we know for a fact. In which direction it will be expanded—toward the Old Village or the New—is not yet known. As soon as we find out we shall report to you.

"Read our Bulletins and pass on the word to your friends. For freedom and independence! For world peace!"

The village police tore down the leaflets wherever they found them, but many of the villagers had time to read them and the alarming news spread swiftly from village to village.

4

With the short cut to the mountain closed, Sumiko now had to take the long way through the valley past Turtle Hill. Going there was easy enough, for it was still light when she left home, but she had to come back alone in the dark, for Ryukichi and Yasaku had to hurry off with the freshly printed matter as soon as it was ready and Heiske remained behind to keep watch over the hut.

What she dreaded most was having to cross the rope bridge in the dark. It was a terrifying experience. The ropes swung precariously in mid-air; there were wide gaps between the slippery footboards and it was easy enough to miss your footing; the old straw ropes might snap at any moment and send her hurtling down into the chasm. Sumiko's head would reel at the thought and her hands would tighten on the rope rails.

But more frightening still was to walk past the cave in the rock where Hanzaemon the Badger was supposed to dwell, and past the big oak beneath which the cinema actor had shot himself. Hurrying past these sinister places in the darkness, Sumiko would fold her hands and whisper the incantation.

There were now three duplicators in the hut on the mountainside. Ryukichi had enlisted three more assistants, one lad from the Old Village and two from Monastery Hill. They worked during the day and Yasaku, Heiske and Sumiko took over at night. There was plenty to be done.

Sumiko helped with the printing, cut stencils and drew illustrations. Matao had given her the task of illustrating a verse that was going into the current issue of *The Helmsman*. It was a long verse which began thus:

*Once again as in those days of yore,
When peasants marched on daimyo castles
Bearing the rough mat banners of revolt;
Once again the peasants march,
With the banners of their ancestors upraised.
But now our banners bear a new legend:
"Down with bases! Down with war!"
Now, instead of facing samurai with their lances,
We face Japanese policemen
With revolvers and tear-gas bombs,
And behind them in chariots
Their overlords from overseas.*

and ended with the following lines:

*The banners of revolt arose at once
In the fishing hamlet of Uchinada, on Ishima islet,
In the villages that cling to Ashama's slopes. . . .*

*And dockers, miners, students, all true patriots
Flock by the legion to their comrades' aid
And crimson flags mingle with mat banners.*

Sumiko's illustration to the verse was a dove with ruffled feathers repulsing an aeroplane marked "Enola "

5

That evening she returned from the mountain earlier than usual to find the village in a state of excitement. The lights were on in all the houses, doors were thrown open and knots of people had gathered on the street and beside the fences. Sumiko's uncle too was up although it was past his bedtime. He was sitting on his heels at the gate. When he saw her, he got up without a word and went into the house.

"What's happened, Uncle?" Sumiko asked.

"If you weren't gadding about all the time, you wouldn't need to ask," he growled, as he prepared to retire for the night. "You'll get yourself into trouble one of these days, mark my words."

The sound of high-pitched girlish voices singing came from the next yard. Sumiko looked over the fence and saw Ineko and Harue sitting in a wooden tub of water under the chestnut tree.

"Come on in," invited Ineko. "The water is still warm. Come and learn the new song. Haru-chan is teaching us."

"What's happened here?" Sumiko asked. "Anybody arrested?"

Ineko shrugged her shoulders. No one could say what had happened. Village urchins had seen cars drive up to the round rock and Amis in white coats and Japanese policemen make the rounds of all the houses in the settlement near the base. They had heard women inside the houses screaming and crying, and had scampered home in fright. The villagers went down to the settlement to verify the boys' report, but the police stationed outside Aunt Otatsu's house would not let anyone near.

"Perhaps they've started taking blood by force?" Sumiko said.

"Squabbling among themselves most likely," said Ineko, dismissing the matter. "Sumi-chan, do come over here and learn this song. It's the independence song. Everyone's singing it."

Sumiko excused herself on the grounds that she felt tired and out of sorts, and went to bed.

In the morning the villagers learned the reason for the commotion at the settlement. It turned out that American doctors had gone from house to house subjecting all the occupants to medical examination; the women and children were examined separately. The names of all the occupants had been registered and samples of their blood taken for testing. The explanation given was that since the settlement was so close to the military base it was necessary to make sure that the American army personnel were not exposed to any contagion.

All that morning Sumiko worked on the Sakuma rice fields down by the highway. As she was going home, Harue, running from the direction of the bridge, overtook her.

"Have you seen the notices pasted up on the settlement houses?" she said breathlessly. "There's one on Otatsu-san's house too."

They went over to the widow's house. On the clay wall of the hut had been pasted a white slip of paper with the word "CHECKED" in thick black letters. Three Japanese characters certifying that the occupant of the house had gone through medical examination, and below that the name "Nagai Otatsu, 34 years of age."

Sumiko stared at the sign. Then she turned her head and saw Otatsu herself, with her baby at her back, sitting at the edge of her corn field. Beside her squatted the skinny old school charwoman Otoyé, writing something on the ground—telling her fortune obviously.

"What if they come to our house too?" said Harue, and shuddered. "I shall run away. I shan't let them touch me!"

Sumiko went over to the wall and began to tear the paper off with her nail, but Harue stopped her.

"Don't do that! Otatsu-san will have to pay a fine!"

They turned back to the village. As they were passing Kuhei's plot, a jeep passed them. A little farther down the road it stopped and the soldier who had been driving jumped out and lifted up the hood. The other Americans got out of the car as well.

Harue pushed her hair under her kerchief and ran over the field to her house. Sumiko, lowering her kerchief over her eyes, walked quickly past the soldiers. As she reached her gate she heard them laughing and whistling after her. She glanced round and saw the soldiers looking toward the tall fence beyond the mulberry trees behind which Harue's slender figure had disappeared. A few minutes later Harue's face reappeared over the fence, to the delight of the soldiers who greeted her with loud whistling and guffaws.

6

One day a strange-looking aeroplane appeared. It was a small red plane bearing no identification marks and it glided noiselessly across the sky. It came from the direction of the base, flew over New Village at a good speed, rounded Chestnut Hill and was coming down near the round rock when the anti-aircraft guns went into action. The red plane flew off in the direction of the sea. Shell splinters rained down on the flooded rice fields raising miniature geysers. As soon as the shooting ceased, women and children carrying bundles came running out of the houses in the village and headed for the cemetery. Kuhei's wife with her baby at her back ran shouting in a voice of horror and despair: "The war has begun! War!"

Another aircraft painted the usual colour came into sight from Yugeh Hill. It was trailing a long red streamer behind it. The guns fired another volley and there was a rattle of machine-guns. The tail caught fire and the plane disappeared in the clouds, leaving behind a trail of white and black smoke.

Sumiko sat with a crowd of other women under the mulberry trees outside Harue's house. Ineko's grandmother was seated on the grass murmuring hasty prayers with her palms pressed tightly together.

Presently a clerk from the village council cycled up and announced that there was no cause for alarm: it was only artillery drill. But the villagers were not convinced. The day's events were discussed until late at night. Many refused to believe the clerk's explanation and declared that the red plane had come over from Korea.

The doubters gathered in a circle on the common. In the inner circle sat the old men, next came the younger men, and the women stood at the back.

"So the artillery range has started functioning," said Kuhei, whose head was swathed in bandages—a shell splinter had grazed the back of his neck. "Now we can see there will be all sorts of dragon-flies and scorpions flying about here all the time, curse them . . ." and he spat in disgust.

Shouts of protest rose from the back rows. "Our rice fields will be polluted with the stench of gunpowder!"

"The rice will go to Korea to feed the Amis anyway!"

"The water pipe on my field was smashed by a splinter!"

Old Heizo told the gathering of a meeting in the village council the day before. When the meeting began, three young men had asked permission to read out a proposal from the Communist nucleus of the Old and Eastern villages, but the chairman had ordered them to leave the premises, declaring that questions having no bearing on the business in hand would not be added to the agenda. At first the young men had refused to comply, and there had been quite an uproar, but finally they had had to go. After the Elder had reported on his talk with the Tokyo official, the council had resolved to wait for the government's reply to the petition from the three villages.

"What were the Reds proposing?" someone asked.

"They only want to stir up trouble, those Reds," croaked one-eyed Jinjaku, Harue's father.

Yaeko's father supported him. "Yes, the Reds are out to mislead everybody and create disturbances."

At that moment Yasaku came over to Sumiko who was standing with the women and whispered to her that she need not go to the hut that evening, but to be sure and come tomorrow as early as possible. There would be a fresh bulletin to put out.

Meantime a heated argument had broken out in the inner circle. Jinjaku was vigorously supporting the Elder:

"The Elder is doing right to advise us to refrain from hasty actions. The main thing now is to keep our heads, otherwise we can spoil everything. And on no account must we allow ourselves to be provoked by the Reds!"

"It's all very well for the Elder," a woman's voice piped up: "His plot is over beyond Eastern Village, so he has nothing to worry about. Besides, he does only what landlord Sakuma tells him."

"Yes, the Elder didn't tell us the whole story," said another woman. "If it wasn't for those leaflets we might never have known what that official really said. . . ."

Jinjaku got up and raised his hand: "You take your foolish remarks away from here, and don't mix in men's talk."

"We'll all be driven away from here soon," Ineko's mother cried, "and all you can do is sit there mumbling. Call yourselves men? You're no better than snails sprinkled with salt."

She made a gesture of disgust and walked away. The other women followed her, talking excitedly among themselves.

The men lingered on the green for a long time. Sumiko had already gone to bed when her uncle returned. Groping in the darkness, he almost

tore down the mosquito netting and plumped down on his bedroll, muttering angrily to himself.

"Is it true that snails shrink away when you sprinkle salt on them?" Sumiko asked him innocently.

"Don't talk nonsense." She heard a loud smack in the darkness. "You've gone and let in the mosquitoes. Can't you hang the netting up properly?"

Sumiko giggled: "I shall find a snail tomorrow and try. . . ."

A car roared past the house and came to a stop further down the street. Sumiko sat up to listen to the buzzing of a mosquito near her pillow. At that moment she heard the noise of a car starting and a muffled cry of distress: "Help! Help!"

The cry broke off. There was the sound of frightened voices and dogs barking. Sumiko's uncle lifted the edge of the mosquito net and opened the window a crack. Lights flickered over near the mulberry trees and he saw people running in that direction. He sprang up and ran out of the house in his bare feet. A curious muffled wailing sounded from the house of Jinjaku. A man rode past on a bicycle carrying a paper lantern.

"They went down to the highway!" someone shouted after the cyclist. "See where they turn from there!"

Everyone was running toward Jinjaku's house. The wailing continued. Sumiko's uncle came over to their window.

"Go to sleep," he said.

"Has anyone been killed?" she asked.

He reached out to close the shutter, but Sumiko held it open with both hands.

"Tell me, has anyone been killed," she insisted.

"Jinjaku's daughter has been kidnapped."

7

Jinjaku went to the chief of police in town and filed a complaint, giving a detailed account of the circumstances of the kidnapping. The chief of police said he would turn over the complaint to the commander of the American military base. A few days later Harue was traced to a Red Cross hospital. She had been picked up in a state of complete collapse outside the juvenile delinquents' home on the outskirts of town. Her hands were bound with the belt of her gown; the gown itself was missing. Her condition was considered grave.

Two weeks later Jinjaku was summoned to the police station and the answer given by the chief of the American base was read to him. It stated that none of the personnel of the local American garrison had left barracks on that particular night. The father of the victim had not given any clue as to the identity of the kidnappers, other than that they wore the American army uniform and that they had spoken some foreign language. This evidence was insufficient to cast any suspicion on the United States forces—but it was enough to indicate that the complaint was a vicious libel.

Sumiko stopped going to the hut on the hill. Soon after the kidnapping incident Ineko was sent to stay with an aunt who lived in another district. She had come, red-eyed with weeping, to say good-bye and to bring Sumiko a message from the hill strictly forbidding her to go to work after

dark, since the only road now left to the mountain had also become dangerous. The Americans had put up a shack of some kind on the north side of Chestnut Hill—they evidently intended building a filling station—and there were always a number of American cars and soldiers hanging about the place. Sumiko had better stay at home for a while and wait for instructions. Kanji and Sugino had said Sumiko was to regard their decision as an order to be obeyed without question.

Reluctantly Sumiko obeyed, and now she seldom went out in the evenings.

"Got frightened, eh?" remarked her uncle, and before she had time to answer, added: "You should always listen to your uncle. I'm glad you've come to your senses at last."

The red aeroplane which the villagers had nicknamed the "red dragon-fly" came over several more times. In order to avoid accidents, the Elder warned the inhabitants of the three villages to take shelter under the trees if they happened to be working in the fields during artillery practice.

The people grew accustomed to the "dragon-fly"; it was dangerous only when it flew over the village, for the shell-splinters might come crashing down on people and the flimsy dwellings. Far more dangerous were the jeeps and Studebakers which tore through the village streets at the dead of night, driven by men who were not subject to Japanese laws and who could stop the car at any house, break in and do whatever they pleased without fear of punishment. To complain to the police about their doings was as useless as to complain about an earthquake.

The villagers passed many anxious nights. People were afraid to light their lamps at night and they sat in the darkness until it was time to retire. Urabon, the day devoted to honouring the memory of the dead, was only a few days off, but few had had the courage to hang up memorial lanterns at their doors as custom demanded, and souls of the departed were obliged to grope their way to their former homes in the dark.

Sumiko's uncle had hung up an old kerosene can on a tree near the gate so as to be able to raise the alarm if anything happened. On the night before the fete-day a new bulletin appeared on the tree. It contained the proposal which the Communist nucleus of Old and Eastern villages had tried to submit to the meeting of the village council.

It proposed calling a meeting of the inhabitants of all three villages, electing a committee to fight the expansion of the military base and to launch its activities by issuing an appeal for help to the whole country. "We cannot sit by and let Enola swallow us all up. We must act!"

OPERATION REMINDER

1

Small wooden tablets with the names of deceased relatives stood in a row on the altar-shelf. Before each tablet were a bowl of water, a small vase of heather and a saucer of mulberries. Sumiko and her uncle seated themselves before the altar-shelf and performed the ritual of honouring the memory of their dead.

As soon as it was dark they went to the cemetery. Her uncle lighted smoke-sticks on the three graves—in one of them his wife was buried, the other two contained the ashes brought from Hiroshima and Osaka. Sumiko placed a posy of bluebells and cornflowers in a little bamboo vase on each grave. Her uncle then lighted a paper lantern for the souls of the departed and they set off for home, joining the procession of lighted lanterns which moved like glow-worms in the dark along the road from the cemetery to the village.

When they reached home, Sumiko's uncle brought out an old wick lamp and placed it on the altar-shelf. The drums summoning the people to the service in Inari shrine began to throb. Sumiko hastily sewed white scarves to the sleeves of her kimono—when you danced they whirled about like a phenix' wings.

"Sumi-chan!" a voice called from the street.

The beating of a hand drum sounded. Sumiko looked out into the yard. A group of girls and young men carrying lanterns stood outside the gate. She saw Yasaku and beside him a short lad in a white shirt with a drum slung over his shoulder. Yasaku came into the yard and bowed to Sumiko's uncle.

"Come with us, Sumi-chan," he said, shaking his long hair back from his brow with a toss of his head. In his black shirt with a turned-back collar and short white trousers with a red belt he looked quite the city dandy, except for the wooden sandals on his feet. Sumiko thrust her home-made fan into her sash, took a quick look in the mirror and fastened on her sandals.

"Now, don't stay out late," said her uncle. He cast a suspicious look at the short lad with the drum. "Where are you from?" he asked him. "Kurotani?"

"This is my cousin Komao," said Yasaku. "He's from the Old Village."

"I shall be late, Uncle," said Sumiko and bowing respectfully went out with the other young people.

They set off with Komao in the lead, beating his drum with his palm, and a small crowd of village children bringing up the rear. The American soldiers standing by the round rock silently watched them pass the reservoir and head for the highway. As they approached the school, Komao and Yasaku quickened their pace.

On the meadow at the edge of the grove where the shrine stood the dancing had begun. The dancers moved slowly in a large circle, stamping their feet and clapping their hands in time to the music. The girls danced with a graceful, flowing motion, their wide sleeves with the long white scarves sewn on them fluttering like birds on the wing. Some of the girls carried fans and coloured paper sunshades. In the light of torches and lanterns strung between the trees, an orchestra of drummers and flutists was ranged under a tall cypress tree. A crowd of spectators, including a number of policemen, had gathered to watch the dancers.

In the centre of the ring a broad-shouldered, gawky youth was performing a complicated pattern of hops and spins. He danced quite well although he did not always keep time to the music.

"Look at Sugino!" said Yasaku with a wink to Sumiko. "Wouldn't believe he could do it, would you?"

Heiske came up, took Sumiko by the arm and pulled her into the circle. She snapped open her fan and moved off with tiny steps, stamping a little foot at each beat of the big drum. A loud laugh arose from the on-lookers as a scraggy little woman with a kerchief on her head and bells at her belt began dancing in the ring next to Sugino. She bobbed her head comically and made jerky movements with her arms. It was Otoye, the school janitress.

Sumiko was executing an intricate turn on one foot when someone pulled her sleeve from behind, thrust a slip of paper into it and dived into the crowd. At that moment Heiske, embarking on too ambitious a spin, bumped into a torchlight pole and went sprawling on the grass. As Sumiko laughing gaily helped him to his feet, she noticed some people in city clothes standing under the torchlight. Among them was Mariko, the plump young woman in the glasses, and Iketani, the student. They too were laughing at Sugino's antics. A little further away Sumiko noticed the hunched figure of Takami in a white striped kimono.

Sumiko left the circle of dancers, hid behind a tree and pulled the slip of paper out of her sleeve. To her surprise it was not a leaflet.

"You do not know me," she read, "but I think of you night and day. You have cast a spell over me and today I want to tell you of the fire that is smouldering in my breast. Please come at once to the shrine on the hill. You will find me waiting for you under a tree. This note is prompted by the purest and sincerest of feelings. I await you with eager impatience as the crane awaits its mate."

She glanced back at the dancers and saw that Sugino and Otoye had gone and two young men, one of them wearing a monkey mask, were dancing in the ring. Heiske and Yasaku, too, were nowhere in sight. She strolled off toward the drummers, but had only gone a few steps when someone caught her by the sleeve. It was Ryukichi.

2

"Let's go away from here," he said softly, his hand still clinging to her sleeve.

Inside the cypress grove it was quite dark. The light from the large lantern at the entrance to the little shrine did not penetrate this far. Sumiko stumbled over a foot, someone coughed and a cigarette end glowed in the darkness. As her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom she noticed people sitting and lying on the grass under the trees. Ryukichi chose a spot between the trees and threw himself down on the grass. Sumiko sat down beside him, gathering her legs under her.

A few yards away sat another couple locked in each other's arms. Through the trees glimmered the torches and the rhythmic beat of the drums came faintly from the meadow, but the music of the flutes was inaudible. Ryukichi clasped his hands around his knees and stared before him. It was so quiet they could hear the buzzing of mosquitoes. Ryukichi ran his hand through his hair and heaved a deep sigh.

Sumiko looked up at him.

"Has Ryu-chan been drinking today?"

"I wanted to, but today it is forbidden."

He slapped a mosquito that had settled on his neck and sighed once

more. From behind the trees came the sound of whispering, a faint scuffle and suppressed laughter. A twig snapped.

"I had a dream the other night . . ." Ryukichi began. "I dreamt I saw some Amis running after a woman, I saw them catch her, pick her up by the arms and legs and throw her into their car. . . . And then I came closer and I saw it was Sumi-chan. I wanted to rescue her but my hands were tied. The car roared off and suddenly it rose from the ground like an aeroplane. I started to shout, and I woke up in a cold sweat. I dashed out of the house and ran down the hill like a madman. It was not yet daylight. I ran all the way to Sumi-chan's house and looked through the hole in the window. At first I couldn't see anything, but after a little I saw Sumi-chan asleep under a mosquito net with one little foot sticking out. . . . I felt calmer and went back home."

"I shall have to cover up that hole," said Sumiko pinching her neck.

He took her hand gently. She pulled it away.

"As for me," she said, "I often dream that I'm lying in a tent and the Amis are standing over me and I'm tied to some queer apparatus like a big clock. I have the radiation fever and I'm delirious. That is exactly what is going to happen one day."

"Nothing of the kind, Sumi-chan is not going to die. You must not think about it." He scratched his head. "When I start thinking about myself, I want to knock my head against a rock. I can't see any way out for myself. I'm terribly lonely living by myself on the mountain, but I daren't ask anyone to live with me. . . ."

"Has anyone got in touch with Yae-chan yet?" Sumiko asked after a brief pause.

"Yes. She isn't working at the factory any more."

"Did she run away?"

"Yes, here's what happened. They had to work fifteen hours a day and the overseer had all the workers injected with hiropon to keep them from falling asleep at work. And in general, they were treated like slaves. The worst offender was a Nisei called Jack Tanaka, a sergeant. He made the girls' lives a misery. Finally they couldn't stand it any longer, and one night they waited for him outside in the yard and jumped on him with a large piece of sacking and beat him up so badly he had to be taken to hospital. After that the Amis among the factory guards started molesting all the girls they could lay hands on. A few days later Yae-chan and a few other girls wrecked the conveyor belt in one of the shops and got away through the lavatory window. They're after Yae-chan as the ringleader."

"Where is she now?"

"She's dug herself in . . . I mean she's hiding."

"Like Grandad and Akagi, the school-teacher?"

Ryukichi nodded. The whispering and giggling behind the trees continued. A young man and a girl walked past and sat down behind a bush. Ryukichi took Sumiko's little finger and twirled it round his own. From time to time she waved away the mosquitoes with her free hand.

"Someone thrust a note in my sleeve," she said. "It said he had been thinking of me for a long time and asked me to meet him at the shrine. Last year Ine-chan got twenty notes like that on the eve of Urabon, at least so she boasted. I shall get some more too, most likely."

"Sumi-chan got nothing of the kind," Ryukichi mocked gently, squeezing her little finger. "She's fibbing."

Stung, she pulled the note from her sash and handed it to him. He peered at it in the gloom.

"It's written in ink and there's no name," he said with a laugh. "That means it was prepared in advance. Somebody wrote about two dozen letters like that and he goes around shoving them into the girls' sleeves. And he hides at the appointed place and waits to see who'll come. I used to do the same thing myself once."

Sumiko snatched the letter away from him, crumpled it up and flung it from her.

He moved closer to her and put his arm around her shoulders. She covered her face with her sleeve. Over on the meadow the drums beat faster and they could hear the dancers shouting: "Ara-essa-sa! Sa-no-yoi-yoi!" Ryukichi pressed her closer to him. Sumiko sat leaning awkwardly to one side, her leg growing numb and the mosquitoes biting her face and hands. But she did not mind.

"I'm a lucky beggar after all," whispered Ryukichi blissfully. "I'd like to sit here like this for ever. . . ."

"I wish there weren't so many mosquitoes," she murmured, burying her face in his shoulder.

After a while the drums ceased and the sound of singing and hand-clapping reached them from the school. Ryukichi sighed and released Sumiko.

"Let's go," he said. "The meeting will begin soon. The others must be there by now."

They got up and, their fingers still interlaced, walked over to the school building.

3

A row of young men stood in front of the building holding torches. The dancing on the meadow had ended and the crowd had drifted over to the school. Ryukichi and Sumiko went over to the swings in the far corner of the school grounds.

"The meeting is beginning!" someone shouted from the back gate. The torches disappeared the same instant, leaving the school steps in complete darkness.

"I shall begin by giving you the latest news," said Tsumoto speaking rapidly. "The answer has been received from Tokyo. The government has announced that the decision is final. The Amis can begin expanding the territory of the base at any moment. They will simply put up a barbed wire fence and start building. A treaty is now being drafted in Washington and Tokyo on the basis of the MSA, the Mutual Security Act. That treaty will turn our country into an American colony."

At that moment the screaming sirens of police cars rent the air. Two cars pulled up at the fence and policemen in steel helmets jumped out and ran over to the school fence.

"We cannot sit idle and wait for it to happen," the speaker went on. "Under the banner of our united national liberation democratic front. . . ."

"Disperse!" someone yelled from the police car. "You can't hold meetings without permission!"

The police rushed in through the back gate. At the same moment leaflets came flying down from the school roof. Iketani, the student, climbed on to a bench near the swings and addressed the crowd through a megaphone:

"Let the whole world know how Japanese patriots fight the Amis! We are against military bases, because we are against wars. Down with the MSA! We want peace! No more Hiroshima!"

The fence went crashing down. Someone seized Sumiko under the arm and dragged her away. She found herself being piloted through a hole in the fence to the green behind the school. A chain of policemen were running up from the direction of Monkey Forest. A shot rang out. There was a sound of an explosion.

Sumiko cried out and doubled up, blinded by a searing pain in her eyes as if pepper had been blown into them. She stopped to rub her eyes and something struck her heavily on the shoulder. She reached out, seized someone's hand and fell to the ground. Someone picked her up and half-dragged her along. She tried to open her eyes but through the tears that blinded her she could see nothing but dark stripes. After a while she heard Ryukichi's voice:

"Can you walk?"

He put her down and she limped along, leaning on Ryukichi's arm. One of her sleeves was torn, and her scarf trailed along the ground. She tore it loose and wiped her face with it. It came away red—her nose was bleeding. Now she could see that they were walking in the woods, making their way among the trees and bushes. Ryukichi was also limping. Heiske and Yasaku were there too.

4

They were walking single file along the narrow path that skirted the edge of Monkey Forest. The Yugeh house was visible on the hill ahead of them.

"The teacher got away," Sumiko heard a woman's voice behind her say. "I was so worried about him."

She turned and saw Mariko, the girl in the horn-rimmed glasses, walking behind her. Mariko smiled and offered Sumiko a small white handkerchief.

"Don't rub your eyes with your hand," she said.

"If Sugino hadn't diverted attention to himself, the teacher would probably have been caught," said Yasaku. Turning to Komao who was behind him, he added: "You did very well too, I must say. Well, the fight has begun in real earnest. We shan't forget tonight in a hurry. . . ."

Heiske also kept his hand over his eyes as he walked; evidently they were suffering from the effects of the tear-gas.

The moon came out of the clouds. They passed the hill and had begun to descend to the bridge near the bamboo grove when a figure emerged from behind a clump of trees, there was a low whistle and several policemen stepped out on to the path. One of them lifted his club and shouted: "Halt!"

Two of the policemen went over to Heiske and Yasaku and hastily searched them. Ryukichi kept in the background, shielding Sumiko and Mariko. Another policeman poked Komao in the chest with his club and ordered him to raise his hands. At that moment two American MPs

and another American in an army cap stepped out of the shadow of the trees.

The policeman drew a folded sheet of paper from under Yasaku's shirt and spread it out. It was a poster. The American in the uniform cap went over and examined the poster in the light of his pocket torch. Another policeman pulled a roll of leaflets out of Yasaku's pocket. Yasaku moved and the policeman seized him by the collar and swung his club, but the American in the cap stopped him with a gesture. He called the policemen aside, said something to them in an undertone and took away the poster and leaflets from them. The policemen withdrew into the thicket and the American MPs followed them.

The American in the cap went over to Yasaku, handed him the poster and the bundle of leaflets and flicked his cigarette lighter. The small flame lit up a round face and widely set eyes. Ryukichi nudged Sumiko and whispered: "The Boogie-woogie man!"

Sumiko recognized him. It was the Nisei with the short arms they had met on their way to town. He had been in civilian clothes then. He lit a cigarette and said in a low voice: "Better turn back, there's another police patrol further on and they're checking up on everybody. They're liable to detain you."

"Thanks," said Komao and bowed. "You've done us a good turn. . . . But you needn't worry, we're not Reds."

Yasaku also bowed. The Nisei nodded and saluted.

"Which way are you going? To the New Village?"

"Yes," Yasaku replied, inclining his head again. "We've just been to the dance. . . ."

"I can go part of the way with you. If we come across any Japanese policemen I'll say you're my friends and it'll be all right. . . ."

He glanced at Yasaku, then turned to Mariko and laughed.

They moved off, the Nisei walking with Yasaku.

"No, I didn't draw it," Sumiko heard Yasaku say in answer to the Nisei's question. "I don't know how to draw. I write a little verse now and again . . . trying my hand at it."

"I like those Katsu Gengo posters," the Nisei said.

When they sighted the school, the Nisei turned off the path and headed for the highway. They came out near the traffic sign. The Nisei looked up and down the road, then saluted, placing two fingers to the peak of his cap.

"You won't have any trouble from here on. Take the path down to the valley and up in the direction of the mulberry grove. I don't think you will meet any police patrols at New Village."

"Thanks," said Yasaku and bowed.

All the others bowed their thanks.

"Don't mention it," the Nisei said with a deprecatory gesture. "I'm a Nisei and I have to wear this wolf's clothing, but I have Japanese blood in my veins. As soon as I saw that poster and the leaflets, I knew you were patriots. . . . And I'm glad to have been of service to you." He gave them a quick searching look: "You won't give me away, I trust. It's all right for you, but it would be all up with me. I'm a serviceman . . . an interpreter attached to the quartermaster division of the base. The Americans treat us Niseis no better than Negroes and other coloured people."

"We're not informers," said Heiske gruffly.

"I can give you the names of those swine who kidnapped the girl from New Village," he said. He took a notebook out of his pocket and leafed through it. "Want to make a note of them?"

Mariko stepped forward and produced a fountain pen and note pad from a pocket in her skirt.

"Robert Pinchbeck, a lieutenant of squadron 12 and Damon Keyes, a sergeant of the 38th artillery. Pinchbeck went off to Korea right after the affair, and he got his. But Keyes was transferred to Okinawa. The information is authentic."

"Thanks," said Mariko giving him her hand.

"And here's something else. . . ." He glanced round and lowered his voice. "This is a military secret. The base is going to have manoeuvres; they're going to land a force by air. The purpose is to put the fear of God into you people and remind you who's the boss. That's why they're naming the manoeuvres Operation Reminder."

"Are you sure about this?" Mariko asked.

"Perfectly sure. But I ask you again. . . for God's sake don't give me away," the Nisei laid his hand on his chest and inclined his head briefly. "Good-bye."

He walked away quickly. When he had disappeared in the darkness, Komao made a clucking noise with his tongue.

"It's a bit queer, just the same. . . I wonder whether he's telling the truth?"

"It's hard to tell at this stage," said Ryukichi. "We'll have to wait and see."

"I think he's sincere," said Yasaku. "Underneath that wolf's clothing there's a human being after all."

"He certainly did us a good turn just now," observed Mariko. "And he gave us those names too."

They had crossed the hollow and were climbing up the hillside.

"The youth festival begins in Bucharest in two weeks' time," said Yasaku with a sigh. "I'd give anything to go. . . Just to have a glimpse of it."

"I see Sumiko can dance," said Mariko. "Would you like to go to the festival, Sumiko?"

Sumiko, dragging herself along wearily, with the handkerchief pressed to her smarting eyes, stopped and nodded.

"Yes," she said. "I would, very much."

"It's girls like you who ought to go to the festival," remarked Mariko.

They said good-bye to Sumiko at her house.

"Mind you don't rub your eyes," Ryukichi cautioned her.

"Put a cold compress on them," said Mariko. "You can keep the handkerchief. I shall come and visit you one day." She took Sumiko's hand and gave it a warm squeeze.

5

The night the news of the Korean cease-fire came over was one of wild revelry for the Americans. Desultory firing could be heard from the direction of the military base; the sky was lit up with coloured flares, a loud-speaker was on full blast in front of the huts at the round rock, and cars full of soldiers roaring drunken songs at the top of their voices raced

through the village with horns blaring. In town the Americans smashed up nearly all the bars and eating places in the vicinity of the baseball field, and a pitched battle was fought in front of the movie theatre on the main street between the Yanks and some Canadian sailors. Several Japanese passers-by were injured.

Two weeks later what the Nisei had said about the manoeuvres with the queer name came true.

Several big aircraft came over at dawn from the direction of Turtle Hill. When they were overhead, paratroopers began to spill out from both sides of each plane's belly. They landed on the hill behind the cemetery and the field near the road to the fishing village. Besides the men, crates, machine-guns and strange tubes, some long, others short, with bell-shaped mouths, were dropped by parachute. Some of the crates and tubes fell into the maize and potato fields near by. The soldiers were in green outfits and wore grey, white or yellow scarves. As soon as they had rolled up their parachutes they set to mounting machine-guns and setting up tripods for the tubes.

Next came big planes looking like kites, each with three fuselages—a thick one in the middle and a thinner one on either side. Doors opened in the central sections and parachutists poured out tied to each other with long ropes. Two-wheeled carriages with multi-barrelled guns came down on bigger parachutes.

Some of the paratroopers assembled in front of Otatsu's house were marched off, and disappeared behind the garden fence.

Again the kite-shaped planes appeared with more troops, who parachuted down near the road leading to the fishing village. Soon the sound of rifle and gun fire and the chattering of machine-guns came from lower down on the road and behind the cemetery; the paratroopers had engaged the force advancing overland from the base.

Operation Reminder was over by noon, and the Japanese police and Security Corps manoeuvres began. The latter were in full battle kit, in steel helmets, and had tank and armoured car support. At first they lined up at the fringes of Monkey Forest and then fanned out and moved in on the woods from three sides, firing from tommy-guns and machine-guns. The tanks and armoured cars roared past the Old Village in the direction of Tunnel Hill. After this the Security Corps men began to drill at the foot of Yugeh Hill with American instructors standing in jeeps issuing the orders. Nisei interpreters translated the commands into Japanese.

After the exercises the Security Corps units paraded through the Old and the New villages, to the accompaniment of derisive shouts from little boys ensconced behind garden fences and in trees:

"Shoeshine!"

"Haba-haba! Panpan!"

6

As soon as the Americans had gone, the villagers went to the cemetery to put the graves in order. The graves on the side of the hill where the paratroops had dug mortar emplacements suffered the most damage.

When she came home from the cemetery, Sumiko went to help Ineko's mother prepare mushrooms and radishes for drying.

"I hear Sumi-chan's uncle wants to go to work on the mountain? Is that true?" Ineko's mother asked.

"He must have had a row with the steward again," said Sumiko. "He had been promised a plot of land, but the steward interfered."

Ineko's mother nodded.

"I heard the steward wanted Sumi-chan to work for the landlord, but Sumi-chan's uncle wouldn't hear of it."

"No, they wanted me to work in the hotel at the resort," said Sumiko. "I'd rather work in the factory."

"Ine also wants to work in town, she says it is very dull living in the country with her aunt. They'll soon be hiring women for the Yugeh canning factory, but that will mean living in a hostel."

"Is the Badger doing the hiring?"

"No, the Elder's wife. But it amounts to the same thing. I am afraid to let Ine live in town by herself. Have you heard what Yaeko did? She incited the other factory hands to rebel, then she damaged some machine and ran away. She's a real Red now. That's why I'm afraid to let Ine go. . . ." Ineko's mother shook her head gravely. "And have you heard about Jinjaku's girl? She didn't go home after she was discharged from hospital. She stayed in town and they say she's gone bad . . . become one of those panpan-girls. I suppose she thought her life's ruined anyway . . . poor thing. Such a nice girl she was. . . ."

Ineko's mother sighed and wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.

A car pulled up further down the street. Ineko's mother went over to the fence.

"They've come again. It's not manouevres this time."

Two cars stood outside Kuhei's house. Presently several Americans came out of the house, one in a white smock and carrying a small bag. With them was a burly Japanese in American uniform.

"They've pasted a slip on the door. . . . They've come to examine us. . . . Oh dear, they're coming this way." Ineko's mother took the knife from Sumiko. "You'd better run home."

Sumiko ran into the house and woke up her uncle. Just then they heard loud voices outside and the gate creaked.

"The Amis are coming," said Sumiko, shaking her uncle who was still half asleep. "They've come to check up on us."

When he saw an American in dark glasses in the doorway, her uncle sprang up in alarm.

"You can't come here," he shouted. "This girl is sick."

With trembling hands he opened the little drawer of the altar-shelf, got out the brass tag and handed it to the intruder. The latter examined it and passed it on to a stout red-moustached American in a white coat. Then he pulled a small camera out of its case and motioned to Sumiko to step outside. Loud screams were heard from the street.

"Don't be afraid," said the Nisei. "We aren't going to examine you."

The American in the dark glasses seized her hands from behind. Sumiko cried out: "Help!"

There was a commotion behind the fence. Someone yelled:

"Villains! Murderers!"

The Nisei slipped his arm through Sumiko's and whispered in her ear: "Don't yell. We're not going to hurt you. . . ."

He led her outside. The crowd at the fence was trying to push past the policemen at the gate. The Nisei called over Sumiko's uncle.

"Tell those people not to get excited. Calm them down. We're not going to hurt anybody. . . ."

Her uncle went over to the fence, but the commotion did not subside. The American in the dark glasses photographed Sumiko back and front, and the fat man with the red moustache pulled aside the collar of her kimono and examined her scar. Her uncle went over to the Nisei and asked in a trembling voice: "Why did you take her photograph? She hasn't done anything wrong. . . . She isn't a Red."

The Nisei calmed his fears. The American doctors were going to cure the girl, he said. She was seriously ill. She must report to the medical division at the air base and she would be given medicine. But she had to have a blood test first.

"I don't want any blood test," said Sumiko and opened her mouth to scream, but her uncle stopped her.

"They won't take any money for treating you," he said. "Just let them take a drop for the test. Don't be afraid."

The fat American took her finger, quickly made an incision and pressed a piece of glass against the bleeding finger. The uproar outside the fence broke out afresh. The policemen pushed the crowd of women away as the group of Americans came out of Sumiko's house and headed for the next gate. Soon the street echoed to the cries of Ineko's mother.

"I am not sick! You can't come in here!"

The women in the street shouted their protests:

"What are you doing here? Go away!"

"We don't need any medical examination. We're not panpan-girls."

"Get out of here!"

At that moment a car drove up to the house and two soldiers got out and they and the MPs began to manhandle the women. The women fought back shrieking and yelling at the top of their voices. Kuhei's wife, her hair all dishevelled, rushed into Sumiko's yard, picked up a stick and started beating on the empty kerosene can hanging on the tree. A red-faced American stuck his head over the fence just behind her and swung his club, but another woman with streaming hair hung on to his arm.

"Swine! Swine!" she squealed.

Kuhei's wife sprang out through the gate and leapt at the Nisei. An American soldier seized her from behind, but a heavy blow sent him reeling. The man who had struck the blow rushed over to help the women fighting beside the cars. Strips of black plaster were sticking to the man's naked back. There was a splintering noise as an MP holding Kuhei's wife by the hair crashed into the fence; Sumiko seized a rake and struck him a smart blow on the ear. He let out a yell and snatched at his helmet. At that moment the cars tooting their horns began to move off slowly, and the Americans, fighting their way through the crowd with fists and clubs, jumped on to the moving vehicles. The fat man in the white coat fired several shots into the air. The Nisei, with his jacket in tatters, ran after the second car. Ineko's father caught up with him and hit him on the head. The car slowed down, two soldiers jumped off, picked the Nisei up under the armpits and dragged him to the car. The fat man fired several more shots into the air, and the cars shot forward, raising a cloud of dust.

"Let them have it!" the half-naked man with the plaster on his back roared hoarsely. He stood in the middle of the street with a stick in his hand, beating savagely at an American army cap lying on the ground.

Blood streamed from his nose. It was Jinjaku. The stick broke and he flung it from him and stamped on the cap until his rage spent itself.

Kuhei's wife scraped the slip marked "CHECKED" off her door and told the women who crowded around what had happened. She had been working in the fields when she saw the Americans entering her house. By the time she got there they had left. Her 12-year-old daughter Fiye and an old woman had been alone in the house when the Americans came. They had held the girl's hands behind her back and examined her. Before that they had been to Karuku, Yasaku's uncle, and had forced his elder sister, a teacher at a women's college who had come to the country for the day, to submit to a medical examination.

That evening Yasaku and Heiske came to Sumiko and asked her for a detailed account of the incident.

A day later a fresh bulletin put out by *Our Land* and *The Helmsman* appeared carrying an interview with a resident of New Village who had witnessed the incident. An article stated that the courageous behaviour of the inhabitants of New Village had won the admiration of all Japanese patriots. If the Americans showed their faces there again, people from other villages in the neighbourhood and from town as well would come to the aid of New Village. The Americans must make a formal, public apology to the Japanese people and leave the country at once.

7

Shortly after the incident, Sumiko had a visit from Mariko. She wore dark glasses with thick green frames, a leather jacket and men's trousers, and Sumiko did not recognize her at first as she rode up on her bicycle, accompanied by two long-haired students.

"The affair here has caused quite a sensation in town," said Mariko, seating herself on a mat on the earthen floor and lighting a cigarette. "There was nothing about it in the newspapers, but everyone knows just the same. So they came to Sumi-san too? I am glad it all ended so well."

Mariko went on to say that the Democratic Women's Association had held a meeting and begun collecting signatures to a statement of protest. All progressive organizations had signed the protest.

"Have there been any posters about it?" Sumiko inquired. "Has Katsu Gengo drawn anything?"

"Katsu Gengo is on the job, don't worry," said Mariko, waving her plump little hands with a laugh. "Our Youth League had a nice idea for a drawing: a peasant standing in one corner with his leg raised, and in the opposite corner the back view of a man who has just been given a kick in the behind, and an American army cap in the air. 'Operation Reminder' we called it. Everyone who can draw even a little was mobilized to help, and it's in the works already. We made over a hundred big posters in one night and by morning we had them posted all over town. Signed 'Katsu Gengo' as usual. A wonderful poster."

"So that Nisei was telling the truth," said Sumiko. "I thought he was only trying to frighten us."

Mariko took a small flat vanity case out of her pocket and powdered her nose.

"I met him the other day. He showed me his papers. He really is an interpreter at the base, he works in the quartermaster department. They

call him Freddy Tayama. He came to see me the other day. He told me Colonel Younghusband, the chief of the base had reprimanded the medical division chief and told him that the examination of Japanese women must stop."

"So they won't come around any more?"

"That's what Freddy says. It's a good thing the people here put up such a staunch resistance. But they're starting something else. Freddy says the question of extending the base has been definitely decided. Some government officials from Tokyo are coming soon to notify the local inhabitants. There is going to be more trouble. . . ."

"Isn't that Nisei afraid to visit you?"

"He only comes at night . . . secretly. No one sees him. My house is in a side street, there are no shops there, only private houses, and so you rarely meet anyone on the street." Mariko glanced at Sumiko and added with a sly smile. "I suppose Ryukichi knows nothing of all this. He was sent to Tokyo to take a course of Party study. He will be very worried when he hears about it. . . ."

Sumiko dropped her eyes.

"How is Grandad and Akagi the school-teacher?" she asked.

"They are quite safe. I saw Yasaku yesterday in town, he is busy writing a long poem entitled 'Reminder.' He told me Sumiko-san's uncle offered the Amis a talisman of some kind."

"It isn't a talisman," said Sumiko. She went over to the altar-shelf and took the tag out of the little drawer. "The Amis gave it to me that time. . . ."

Mariko examined the tag. Pointing to the letters and the number CC-K 2279 Sumiko asked: "What does that mean?"

Mariko told her that it was some sort of identification. It was impossible to say exactly what the letters stood for—possibly the K stood for keloid, the CC could be either "Casualty Case" or "Casualty Commission."

"Isn't it the same as CIC?"

"No." Mariko explained the difference to her and, taking out her fountain pen and notebook, wrote the letters down for her so that she should not confuse them.

"The Amis took my blood to be tested and said I should go to the doctors over at the base. I don't want to go. They'll only look me over and jab my arm with their needles. But they won't try to cure me."

"Better not go," said Mariko, frowning. "I hear that the medical division at the base is in the same building as the intelligence department."

"Suppose they come for me?"

"After what happened they aren't likely to."

There was a tinkling of bicycle bells outside, and Mariko rose to take her leave. She invited Sumiko to come and see her whenever she was in town. She lived not far from the American quarter. You crossed the street and went as far as the mat-making shop, then turned left and it was the third house on the right. There was a lamp over the entrance with the name "Kuroda" on it. If Mariko happened to be out, Sumiko should go to the House of Culture of the Democratic Youth League. It was on Temple Street, third house just beyond the bridge.

"I want to go to work in town," said Sumiko.

"No, Sumiko-san, you must see to your health first. We shall discuss all that when you come. I shall expect you soon. If I'm not at home you will always find me at the House of Culture."

"But there will be lots of people there. . . ." Sumiko looked down at her patched trousers. "I can't very well. . . . It's probably very grand there. . . ."

Mariko laughed.

"Oh, nobody there pays any attention to clothes," she said. "But the place is very grand, of course, quite a palace. Nowadays the finest buildings have been turned over to the youth, especially the working class youth. Now are you sure you won't forget the address? Temple Street, third house after the bridge. . . ."

Sumiko saw her visitor to the gate. As she rode away, Mariko turned round and called out: "I'll be expecting you!"

8

The secretary of the village council came to the house and told Sumiko's uncle to go at once to the Elder: it was about some telephone call from town. Her uncle told Sumiko he expected to be gone a long time, he was going to be questioned about that last affair most likely.

But he came back very soon, greatly upset.

"I told you you'd get into trouble one of these days. But you wouldn't listen! There's a summons for you from the chief of police. You'd better get ready at once."

"Is anyone else being summoned?" Sumiko asked quickly. "Is it about that affair?"

Her uncle shook his head violently. "No, it's something quite different. It concerns only you. That shows they've found out all about those mysterious comings and goings of yours. I knew this would happen. Now see you make a clean breast of everything. Say they forced you to join them, and that you didn't know what you were doing. If you tell them everything and name all the others involved they'll let you go."

He sat down on his mat, drew up his knees and dropped his head in an attitude of complete dejection. Sumiko combed her hair and dressed quickly, with trembling hands.

"If you are stubborn and refuse to tell them anything they will beat you unmercifully and turn you over to the Amis. . . . And once *they* get hold of you, you're finished. So please be sensible."

She took a fresh scarf and tied it round her neck. Then she took another clean cloth and hid it inside her sash.

"What's that for?" her uncle cried in alarm. "You're not going to the bath-house!"

Sumiko did not reply. She seated herself before the altar-shelf and made her obeisances to the ancestral tablets. She left the house and was about to step in to see Ineko when her uncle caught up with her. "You are not to tell anyone where you're going," he said in whisper. "Now let's hurry."

They had only gone a few steps when her uncle suddenly stopped and slapped himself on the leg.

"There, I quite forgot. They said you were to bring the brass tag with you. Run and get it."

Sumiko raised her eyebrows.

"The tag? What for?"

"I don't know. The police officer who called the Elder said you were to bring the tag with you."

Sumiko opened her eyes wide when she heard this. Then, heaving a deep sigh of relief, she pulled the cloth out of her sash and wiped her forehead.

"So that's it," she said smiling. "I only have to see the doctor. And I thought. . . . Oh dear, I *did* get a scare."

She skipped gaily back to the house and returned with the brass tag, tossing it into the air as she ran. There was nothing to worry about, she assured her uncle. She wasn't going to be questioned or arrested; the doctor at the police headquarters would examine her and tell her she could go to any Japanese doctor for treatment.

They walked at a smart pace, for her uncle wanted to be back before dark. Everything was in readiness for harvesting the rice crop. The 210th day had passed without a typhoon. The mats had been spread out to dry on the fences, the water had been drained off the fields and the rice stalks were drooping under the weight of the ripe grains. Bunches of soya bean plants lay root upwards drying on the boundary strips. Large flocks of sparrows hovered over fields of buckwheat and maize and perched on rope lines stretched between poles despite the pegs and bells hung on the lines to frighten the birds away.

Sumiko and her uncle had to take the long way to town, but they were given a lift not far from Kurotani Village by a lorry from the stone quarry beyond the river, and reached their destination in no time.

The police department was situated in the heart of the city opposite the public gardens. A woman in uniform, seated behind the barrier in the outer office, instructed them to wait outside the last door on the left of the corridor. They joined a number of other people squatting on their heels by the wall. From time to time prisoners passed down the corridor under escort. One young man with a drawn, unshaven face was led by a rope tied to his hands which were bound behind his back.

Sumiko got up and looked out of the window. There was a long line of women standing outside a one-storey brick building. Some of the women were dressed in fashionable European clothes, others wore kimonos with gaudy designs. Presently a small group of very young and heavily powdered girls, all in European dress and with waved hair, came into the yard, led by a stout elderly woman wearing red gloves and carrying a sunshade. She stood the girls at the end of the queue and moved aside.

A policeman came over to Sumiko, and asked her what she wanted.

"I've come to see the doctor," she replied.

"Doctor? Then you'd better go over there," he said, pointing to the brick building in the yard. "And you'd better hurry or you'll be late."

Sumiko and her uncle went out into the yard. Sumiko took a place in the line behind a woman in a yellow jersey, green trousers and Japanese sandals on her bare feet. Her toe nails were painted a bright red. A man

in a white coat looked out of the door and the women at the head of the line started a loud argument with him. Sumiko's uncle went over and squatted beside the elderly woman in the red gloves.

Someone gave Sumiko a thump in the back. She turned round and almost cried out in surprise. There stood Harue, but a Harue Sumiko had never seen before: she was dressed in European style and carried a little leather bag over her shoulder, her lips were heavily smeared with lipstick and her eyebrows had been plucked. She took in Sumiko's patched trousers with a glance, and her face dimpled in a smile:

"First time?"

Sumiko nodded.

"Is Haru-chan ill?" she inquired with concern.

"Not yet, but just checking up." Harue took a cigarette out of her purse and lit it. "I'm bound to get ill sooner or later. We're all of us due for the rubbish heap. Has Sumi-chan been doing this long?"

"Doing what?"

"Well . . . this."

At that moment Sumiko's uncle came up and looking askance at Harue growled: "Come away from here. This is the wrong place."

Harue stuck out her lower lip derisively, blew out a curl of smoke and turned away. As Sumiko and her uncle hurried toward the gates, a policeman caught her by the sash.

"Hey, where do you think you're going. We'll round you all up at night anyhow if you haven't got a certificate."

Her uncle scowled at the policeman and waved his hand in front of his nose. "We've come on different business."

They hurried back into the office building. Her uncle went into the last door on the corridor and came out a few minutes later with a woman in police uniform.

"You must go to some other place," he said in a low tone. "Don't be afraid, I shall go with you. They will give you some medicine."

The woman led the way along the main street toward the American quarter. A middle-aged American was waiting for them at the entrance. He turned to Sumiko's uncle. "Who are you?" he asked brusquely.

Sumiko's uncle bowed. "I am this girl's uncle. I have come with her. . . ."

"There's only one pass here, and it's for the girl. You'll have to wait outside." He turned to Sumiko. "Follow me."

9

He led her down a driveway lined with shrubs and trees, through which she caught glimpses of American children playing on a green lawn under the eye of Negro and Japanese nurses. They passed a long two-storey white house with a red tile roof and a garage attached and came to a one-storey house of light green stucco surrounded by a thick wire netting and backed by a tall fence with barbed wire running along the top.

When they came nearer, Sumiko noticed that one half of the green house looked out into a yard enclosed in a tall brick wall. Several white ambulance cars stood in front of the building. Sumiko's guide led the way into the building and showed his pass to the MP at the door. They walked

down a corridor, past doors with frosted glass panes, turned left and then right, and entered a large room lined with tall white cupboards. A sentry with a rifle stood guard at the door, and the American showed his pass again.

They crossed the large room and entered a narrow, thickly carpeted corridor at the far end of which was a door covered with brown leather.



The American stopped outside a door on the right and pressed a button on the wall. A green light flashed on over the door. The American turned the knob and motioned to Sumiko to enter.

She found herself in another large room with frosted window panes. Behind a large desk piled with books and thick folders sat a grey-haired white-coated man with a florid complexion. The American who had brought Sumiko took her tag, motioned her to a stool and, exchanging a few words with the grey-haired man at the desk, turned to address her:

"The professor says you were supposed to come here long ago. Your name is on our list and you were given a tag for free medical treatment. You will get proper medical care here, much better than what the Japanese doctors could give you."

The professor told Sumiko to show him her shoulder; he felt the scar, examined her eyes and stroked her hair. Then he lighted a pipe, took a sheet of paper out of a folder and said something in English to Sumiko in a soft voice. She noticed that his eyes were of different colours, one eye was grey, the other blue.

"The professor says," the other translated, "that he has a granddaughter just your age. That is why he feels sorry for you and he would like to cure you. You were in the very centre of the city that day, which means that your blood must have been affected. . . . You are liable to fall seriously ill at any moment. We want to prevent that."

Sumiko looked the professor straight in the eye.

"Are you going to give me some medicine?"

The interpreter translated the professor's answer:

"We are going to inject some very good medicine into your blood . . . it is a very expensive drug, only very rich people in America can afford it. It is called Phosphorus 32. It is unobtainable in Japan."

The professor took a small booklet in leather binding out of a folder and handed it to Sumiko. It had her photograph pasted inside and some English writing and a stamp.

"From now on you will be under our medical care," said the interpreter. "You needn't go to any Japanese doctors. This certificate is issued you in place of the brass tag. You will show it at the door. It is your pass to this building. Don't lose it and don't show it to anyone. Also don't tell anyone you are being treated here. You will come here the day after tomorrow in the morning. If you don't come we'll send a policeman for you and bring you here."

Sumiko bowed. The professor smiled pleasantly and waved his hand. She followed the uniformed American out of the room. The sentry outside the large room with the white cupboards examined her pass and saluted. The sentries at the main entrance and at the gate did the same.

Her uncle was sitting under a tree on the other side of the street. When he saw Sumiko he put a hand quickly to his heart and staggered back against the tree. Sumiko hurried over to him.

"They told me to come back the day after tomorrow and to come here regularly after that. They are going to inject me with some American drug."

Her uncle stared at her and his jaw dropped: "Inject something?"

"Yes, they stick a needle into your arm and squirt some liquid into you."

Her uncle shook his head in horror.

"That's dangerous. Their drugs are no good for us Japanese. Their blood is full of fat, because they eat so much meat. They may kill you with their drugs. You mustn't go there."

"The Ami said if I didn't come they would send a policeman after me."

"You mustn't go. You may die." He puckered up his face, covered his eyes with his hand and began to weep silently. "I'm afraid. . . ."

"What are we to do?" Sumiko sat down beside him. "They'll make me go."

Her uncle continued to weep. Passers-by began to cast curious glances at them and some seemed about to stop. Sumiko pulled her uncle by the sleeve.

"Uncle," she whispered. "We're attracting attention. Let's go somewhere else."

Her uncle took the cloth she gave him, wiped his eyes and got up.

"It can't be helped," he said. "We shall have to ask their advice. . . ."

"Whose advice?"

"Those er . . . those Reds." He frowned and, lowering his voice to a whisper, said: "Those people you used to associate with in the evenings. You must go to them and tell them about the injections. Tell them it's dangerous, and ask them what to do."

Sumiko looked up as a tramcar rattled past.

"I shall try to find them," she said. "But Uncle had better go home."

"I am going with you."

Sumiko compressed her lips and said severely: "You can't. The police may catch you, they'll beat you and it will be very bad for you. It is safer for us both if I go alone."

"Suppose they advise you not to go to the Amis and tell you to hide at once? I shan't know where you are."

"I'll ask them to let you know, Uncle."

He shook his head. "I'm afraid for you," he whispered. "It's dangerous to go to the Amis but it's dangerous to go to those others too." He sighed and pulled out his empty pipe from his sash and sucked on it. "It would be best to keep away from all of them."

Sumiko got up.

"Go home," she said softly.

10

She found the mat shop Mariko had described and turned into the quiet little street leading up the hill to Mariko's house. She walked past the main entrance and, pushing open a small door in the tall fence, found herself in a tiny backyard. The servant who answered her knock said that the young lady was out and she did not know when she would be back. Sumiko went back into the street and stood for some time on the corner under a street clock. Presently it began to rain and the sky grew rapidly darker. She walked slowly down the hill to the park and then she turned and went back to Mariko's house.

"No, she has not come back yet," said the servant. "She must have gone to that House of Culture. You'd better look for her there."

"I'd rather not go there like this," said Sumiko, glancing down at her shabby trousers and her straw sandals.

"Then wait outside the gate," said the servant.

Sumiko went down to the main street again and walked slowly along the pavement, looking into the show windows as she went. It was quite dark by now but the street was a blaze of lights from the show windows and neon signs. She stopped at the window of a big department store displaying two wax figures, a man and woman, dressed in European clothes; the woman looked like Harue—she had the same short, artificially waved hair and painted lips. An American in uniform sauntered up to the window, glanced at Sumiko and laid his hand on her shoulder. She darted away from the window and walked off quickly without looking back. At the first crossing she ran over to the other side of the street, and hurried on, with her scarf over her head to hide from the Americans and to protect herself from the rain. When she passed the park, she slowed down. The section of the street outside the post office was darker than the rest, the trees lining the pavement here shut out the light from the windows. As

Sumiko approached, her heart still pounding, two Americans, walking arm in arm, pulled up in front of her. One of them lifted his foot to stop her, but she jumped aside and hurried on, only to find her path blocked by a woman in European clothes carrying an open umbrella. The woman shouted something to a group of other women standing in the shadow of the trees, and they quickly surrounded Sumiko. The woman closed her umbrella with a snap and said in a low cracked voice like a man's:

"What the hell are you doing here? This is our beat—from the corner to the bridge. Get out, or we'll kick you out."

"Why can't I go where I like?" Sumiko demanded.

The woman swung her umbrella, but one of the others stopped her.

"You can go over there," she said to Sumiko. "Temple Street begins beyond the bridge. You can have that for your beat."

Sumiko headed for the bridge. At the far end stood a wooden building with a sign in green lights over it: "Paradise Saloon." Through the open windows one could see the swaying figures of men and women dancing to a raucous jazz band. As she was passing the entrance, a jeep full of American soldiers screeched to a stop at the kerb. The soldier next to the driver vaulted over the side, caught Sumiko by the sleeve and pulled her towards him. The car started. Sumiko screamed, tore herself loose, fell on her face but picked herself up at once and dived round the back of the building. She ran on in the darkness over an empty field, past another frame building with the windows and doors boarded up, past several tiny shacks roofed with scrap iron and straw matting. In one corner of the lot beyond a heap of bricks she saw another wooden building with lights in the windows. She ran over toward it. When she reached the pile of bricks she stopped and looked around her. There was no one in sight; she was not being followed. She dropped down on a stone in front of the shack to catch her breath.

The low barrack-like building reminded her of a large village barn, part of it was patched with wooden planks and odd scraps of tin. Several of the windows were broken and pasted over with paper. Over the entrance burned a small electric light, and on the wall beside the door hung a sign: "House of Culture of the Democratic Youth."

Sumiko entered a dimly lighted hallway. On the wall hung a notice:

"Comrades!

"At the end of the month the rent for these premises falls due. If we fail to pay it we shall be evicted at once and the place will be used as a warehouse. We shall not give up our House of Culture! A small contribution from each member will save it."

She heard voices behind the door on her right and pushed it open to a crack. A number of young men and girls were engaged in pasting strips of printed paper, photographs and drawings on a large sheet of cardboard spread out on the floor. Several other girls seated at boxes were writing on long strips of paper, others were cutting out photographs from newspapers and magazines. One young man with shaggy hair was lying on his stomach, painting large letters in one corner of the cardboard sheet. All the girls wore trousers as patched and dowdy as Sumiko's own; some had straw sandals; the young men's canvas trousers were stained with chalk and paint, and were just as shabby as those worn by the lads in the village at home. They all worked in a silence broken only by the snipping of the scissors.

and the plonking of the rain that dropped from the ceiling into a wooden tub near the window.

At the sound of the door opening, they all turned and looked at Sumiko. She had lost her scarf in running over the field. Her hair was dripping wet and her trousers were splattered with mud. The shaggy-haired young man sat up and stuck his brush behind his ear.

"Is Mariko-san here?" Sumiko asked timidly.

"She ought to be here soon," answered the young man. "Are you from the canning factory?"

"No, I am from the country," she said and seated herself on the floor.

The door opened and Kanji came in leaning on a stick. With him was the lad with the angry eyes called Tsumoto. Kanji's eyes widened with surprise when he saw Sumiko.

"Is that you, Sumiko?"

She jumped and rushed over to him, dropped her head on his shoulder and burst out crying. Kanji patted her on the back.

"Now, then, cry baby. . . Wipe your eyes and tell me all about it."

Sumiko wiped her eyes on Kanji's shoulder. He laughed.

"Now this is as good as a theatre," he said heartily. "What has happened to you? What are you doing here?"

Sumiko gave him a rapid account of her adventures. She told about the police summons, her visit to the American professor and the instructions to report for regular treatment; she told him how she had been to Mariko's house, had wandered the streets and had barely escaped being caught by the Americans.

She showed him the certificate the American professor had given her. The shaggy-haired lad's eyes nearly popped out when he saw it. "Look at that!" he ejaculated. "ABCC. . . The secret service again. A brand new outfit."

Tsumoto threw him a stern look and took the certificate. At that moment Mariko entered. She was in an oil-cloth raincoat.

"Sumiko-san!" she cried, her face lighting up with pleasure. "They told me someone had been, but I never thought it was you."

While she wiped her glasses, Tsumoto showed her Sumiko's certificate.

"She was summoned to the medical division of the base headquarters and given this. Irie here got panicky when he saw it; he says it's the name of a new intelligence department."

"ABCC," Mariko read. "No, that's short for Atom Bomb Casualty Commission. It has nothing to do with Intelligence."

Kanji slapped the shaggy Irie on the back with the flat of his hand.

"And you got cold feet right away."

"What is written here?" Sumiko asked pointing to the writing beside her photograph.

"Expiration date, indefinite," Mariko read and translated the words into Japanese. "What I don't understand is the cipher number, XZ-98, where the name should be."

Kanji struck the floor with his stick.

"They want to have a case ready to hand to experiment with. The rats and guinea-pigs used for experiments don't have any names either. Only numbers."

"You mustn't go there," Tsumoto said quickly.

Mariko nodded.

"Sumiko-san was at the epicentre of the explosion that day and that makes her an object of special interest for the Amis."

"If I don't go they will come for me," said Sumiko.

Kanji scratched his unshaven chin and glanced at Tsumoto.

"We'll have to think of something," said Kanji. "She must go into hiding."

Mariko went over to Kanji and Tsumoto and held a whispered consultation with them. Then she slipped her arm through Sumiko's and whispered in her ear.

"Sumiko-san can stay at my place. We'll let your uncle know."

Kanji nudged Tsumoto with his elbow and winked.

"That's the girl I told you about," he said. "The one who sat out in the open for three days without food and won her point."

Sumiko blushed.

"It was only one day . . . and I ate all the time."

Tsumoto's mouth widened in a boyish grin that showed all his teeth. He stuck his hand into his jacket pocket.

"That picture you did of the girl and the tank was a great success. One of Katsu Gengo's best things. Here, wear this," he handed her a badge—an enamelled blue and red flag with a white dove in the middle. "And always be honest and brave. Will you?"

"Always," whispered Sumiko.

Kanji took her by the collar and shook her playfully.

"Brave words should be followed by brave deeds."

THE HOUSE ON THE COMMON

1

Sumiko was given a tiny room on the second floor of the "Japanese" side of Mariko's house. A corridor separated the Japanese half of the house from the European. Mariko's two rooms, furnished in European style, were opposite Sumiko's room.

Mariko was seldom home in the day-time. She worked in an insurance office of which her father, a tall old man with long white whiskers, was the manager. Sumiko rarely saw him, for he came home late at night and never emerged from his apartment on the Japanese side of the lower floor.

The window in Sumiko's room looked out on the backyard which was enclosed by a low fence topped with tiles. Every morning an old man who lived in the house next door practised shooting with a bow and arrow. Slipping his kimono off one shoulder, he would raise the large bow over his head, lower it slowly and shoot the arrow at a paper target set up at the other end of the garden. Mariko told Sumiko that the old man had been a rear-admiral and had commanded a naval squadron during the war in the Pacific.

On the other side was a small house with a bamboo fence occupied by a woman who taught young girls the art of arranging flowers. The verandah where she worked with her pupils was visible from Sumiko's window, and she watched the pupils clipping the stalks of chrysanthemums.

mums and placing them in baskets and vases of different shapes. Beside them on large trays lay bunches of white and yellow chrysanthemums, heaps of thin wire and leaves brought by an old flower-vendor every morning.

It was autumn, the season of chrysanthemums, and Sumiko was often kept awake at night not only by the itching but by a sharp pain in her shoulder. This occurred every autumn. But this time the pain was accompanied by dizziness. And from day to day she felt herself growing weaker.

One morning her nose began to bleed and it was a long time before she could stop the flow. Mariko came just as she had taken off her kimono and was standing before the mirror, with little bits of tissue paper stuffed into her nostrils, staring at her reflection.

"There aren't any spots yet, but there soon may be," she was muttering. "It will begin soon . . . I must call my uncle." She pulled at her hair.

Mariko was so upset that she burst into tears and called in her maid. The two of them put Sumiko to bed and ran for the doctor.

"Japanese doctors won't cure me," said Sumiko. "They'll tell the Amis where I am hiding."

Mariko hastened to reassure her. The doctor she had called was from the Kondo clinic which was known as the "democratic dispensary." It was staffed by progressive doctors and there were no informers among them.

Before long the doctor arrived—a little woman with close-cropped hair, grey at the temples. Her name was Nakaya. With her came a very young nurse with a blue-red badge on the lapel of her white coat. Mariko told the doctor about Sumiko's visit to the American professor.

"Have they given you any injections?" she asked in a high-pitched voice.

"No, so far they have only examined me and made blood tests," she replied. "They said they were going to cure me, because my blood is affected. They were going to inject an expensive American drug called Phosphorus 32."

"Phosphorus 32?" Nakaya echoed in surprise.

After the examination, the nurse took a few drops of Sumiko's blood for a test, and she and Nakaya left.

The next day Nakaya came again.

"There is nothing wrong with your blood," she said. "The American professor was only frightening you. As for injections. . . . Are you sure you are not mistaken about the phosphorus?"

"No, that's what he said," replied Sumiko. "Phosphorus 32."

"Very strange. . . ." Nakaya rubbed her temple in perplexity. "I don't know what to think. A radio-active isotope of phosphorus is used in leucaemia cases, but it would be fatal in your case. It may destroy healthy tissue. The professor knows that as well as I do. Experiments of this kind are very risky; they should only be made on guinea-pigs and rats. . . ."

"The Americans have evidently decided to experiment with human beings," Mariko interrupted. "That is why they need Sumiko. That is why this ABCC has set up a research institute in Hiroshima on Hiji Hill. The patients there are kept exclusively for observation. Nothing is done to cure them."

Nakaya stopped her with a gesture.

"It is hardly likely that they make experiments of this kind there. It would be difficult to hush such things up."

"Nakaya-san, is it not possible that these experiments are performed elsewhere?" Mariko asked. "Secretly perhaps?"

Nakaya shook her head. "I do not know. The Amis are not in the habit of confiding in Japanese doctors."

They looked at each other in shocked silence.

"I remember one word which the American professor kept repeating when he spoke to the other Americans," said Sumiko. "It's a funny word and it stuck in my memory. Thrombopenia."

"Thrombopenia?" Nakaya stared at Sumiko incredulously. Then she turned to Mariko. "Injections of this phosphorus could cause thrombopenia. Our Hayashi injects his rats with phosphorus and they get pernicious anaemia. . . ."

"I'm going to die soon anyway," said Sumiko. "Everybody who was in Hiroshima that time is bound to get ill sooner or later. . . . Besides, I have a keloid tumour."

"Nonsense!" Nakaya admonished her sharply. "It has not been proved that everyone who was burned by the bomb will contract pernicious anaemia or radiation fever. We will try to cure you," she said with a reassuring nod. "We shall do everything in our power to get you well. In the meantime you must lie still and stop frightening yourself. And don't go to the Amis on any account. Do they know you are here?"

"No," said Mariko. "Nor do the Japanese police."

When the doctor had gone, Mariko paced up and down the rooms with her hands pressed to her cheeks. Presently she came over and sat down by Sumiko's bed.

"Pernicious anaemia . . . is it possible they would dare. . . ." She bit her fingers. "But it's monstrous! Monstrous! No, I can't believe it!"

That same day Mariko drove Sumiko to the clinic, where she was given a blood transfusion. After that the nurse came every day to make an injection. Nakaya also prescribed some tablets that had neither taste nor smell, to be taken before every meal and washed down with soda water. Every morning she was given a portion of raw calf's liver chopped very fine and a glass of hot milk mixed with honey.

Before long her dizziness ceased. Nakaya permitted her to take a walk in the yard every morning. But the keloid continued to bother her, especially at night.

2

She was permitted to read only by daylight and next to the window. There were two large bookcases in Mariko's study, one full of foreign books, the other, Japanese. Between the two bookcases hung a picture of a group of naked women and children huddled close together and etched starkly against the background of a fire-blackened hill; fearsome creatures with what appeared to be steel helmets in place of heads were aiming some terrible weapon at the women and children. Mariko told her this picture was a copy of a painting by a famous painter named Picasso, the one who had painted the fluffy white dove she had seen on the enamelled peace badge. The painting was called "Massacre in Korea."

On a small table under the picture stood the photograph of a smiling

youth in a baseball cap and a megaphone in his hand. A tiny vase beside the photograph was always filled with fresh flowers.

Sumiko selected books at random from the big bookcase. She read a book by Biryukov called *The Sea-Gull* and *The Story of Zoya and Shura* written by their mother, both translated from the Russian and published in Tokyo. She liked them so much that she read them twice. In between, she read old pamphlets and magazines printed on a duplicator; there was a pile of them in the corner under the radio.

In one of the pamphlets Sumiko came across a drawing of a young man in a cap carrying a tommy-gun and with a ribbon across his chest bearing the inscription: "Soldier of the Korean People's Army." The young man had thick eyebrows and full lips and he reminded her faintly of Ryukichi. She hid the booklet in a drawer of her table.

Mariko had not said anything about Ryukichi, and Sumiko could not pluck up the courage to ask. She concluded that he must be away in Tokyo studying. Mariko had told her she had seen Matao and Yasaku recently and that they had sent Sumiko their greetings. They reported that her uncle was well and had gone to work in the wood-cutters' co-operative on Tunnel Hill. Not long ago a policeman had come from the town and had questioned her uncle about Sumiko. Her uncle had told him that Sumiko had gone to Hokkaido to work and since she did not write he did not know anything more about her.

Mariko also reported that the magazines *Our Land* and *The Helmsman* continued to put out a bulletin which was now called "On With the Fight." The literary circle on Monastery Hill now called itself "The Fern" and was planning to publish a stencilled magazine under the same title.

Sumiko laid her head on the little table and sighed.

"Everyone is doing something, you are all working except me. I sit here idle all the time. Takami was right when he said we only seem to be alive but actually we..."

Mariko would not let her finish.

"You mustn't talk like that. Sumi-chan must have a little more patience and wait until she is quite well. Nakaya-san says it was not radiation fever Sumi-chan was threatened with but tuberculosis. Sumi-chan will rest a little while longer and then we shall find her something to do."

Mariko went to her room and came back with a folder of pictures.

"In the meantime here is something to keep you busy. You can copy these pictures for our 'paper theatre.' Our Youth League will soon be sending culture brigades out to the villages with the theatre."

The work was easy and pleasant—drawing pictures in India ink on sheets of cardboard and colouring them with crayons. The pictures she copied were of the simplest kind, like the illustrations in books for small children. As soon as one set was ready, Mariko arranged a rehearsal. She placed a lacquered frame on a box on the table and took her position behind it. The audience—Sumiko and the maids—sat in front. A strip of paper attached to one side of the box gave the name of the play, "The Tale of the Yamashiro Uprising," in large fat characters of the kind used in theatre bills. As she inserted one picture after another in the frame, Mariko read the commentary and dialogue on the reverse side. She read with expression, clearly and distinctly, frequently inserting some comment of her own.

The first picture was a typical rural scene—peasant huts, rice fields and, in the background on a hill, a samurai camp with white and red tents. At the foot of the mountain was a pole with a very modern-looking sign which said: "Keep Out."

"This is a little mountain village in the province of Yamashiro," Mariko recited in a solemn voice. "The tale we are about to tell happened four hundred years ago. In those days the samurai ruled Japan, they set up their military bases all over the country and made life very difficult for the common people."

Each time she changed a picture, Mariko rapped on the table several times with a ruler. The next pictures showed the samurai ordering the peasants to tear down their homes to make room for a field to practice archery, breaking into the village, beating up the peasants, taking away their rice and seizing their women.

"Have mercy! She is my only daughter!" Mariko cried in a piteous voice, and twisting her face into a savage snarl, answered in a deep bass: "Scr-r-am! Go to hell! Hurry up!"

Loading the captive women and the sacks of rice on their carts, the samurai rode off to the accompaniment of a ditty sung by Mariko in exaggerated nasal accents:

*"Kiss me quick, kiss me quick,
Oh my baby,
My sweet Kitty!"*

The maids giggled and covered their mouths with their sleeves. Sumiko laughed too.

But at last the peasants' patience was exhausted. And the people, answering the tocsin's summons (Mariko struck the table a number of times with a metal match-box holder) rose up against their oppressors. People bearing banners, bamboo spears and torches flocked from all the villages of Yamashiro province, they came down the mountain roads and paths to the beating of drums (Mariko beat a tattoo with her ruler on the lampshade). A fierce all-night battle ensued between the peasants and the samurai which lasted for the duration of five pictures—on which Sumiko had used a generous quantity of India ink and red crayon with startling effect. And at last, with shouts of "Banzai!" Mariko announced that justice had triumphed. At this point Mariko's face appeared in the frame. She bowed, adjusted her glasses and said:

"So ended the famous peasant uprising in the province of Yamashiro four centuries ago. They drove the samurai out and destroyed their military bases. That is how the inhabitants of Uchinada and other villages are fighting against military bases today, and all honest Japanese are helping them in this fight. Down with MSA! Down with War! Peace the world over! Banzai!"

Sumiko and the maids clapped their hands.

"No more Hiroshima!" cried Sumiko, wiping away her tears. "Oh, Mariko-san! What a wonderful show!"

"Just like a real theatre," said the elderly servant. "Our young lady is a real actress."

Sumiko learned that Mariko had organized the picture theatre circle at the House of Culture. They were working on a repertoire for the road

and Sumiko would be very busy from now on supplying them with pictures for their plays in several copies.

After a while Mariko found work for Sumiko that brought some earnings with it—making paper balls, screens, dolls, umbrellas and other knicknacks for a toyshop kept by the brother of Mariko's elderly servant Onobu.

3

When Mariko had visitors, Sumiko would retire to her own room. Some evening Mariko entertained well-dressed, long-haired youths and girls in expensive European clothes, who talked and argued in loud voices for hours on end, and although she kept her door closed, Sumiko could hear much of what was said.

True, she understood very little of what she heard, for they discussed things that were quite incomprehensible to her and used a great many foreign words. She tried very hard to follow the conversation when the discussion turned to art and artists. But there too she was entirely at sea: they were forever reiterating the names of foreign artists she had never heard of, names like Dali, Tangi and Matta.

But there were other visitors too. These did not stay for supper, or dance to the radiola, or play mahjong far into the night. For them the servants did not need to turn the besom upside down in the kitchen, a procedure that is believed to speed the departure of tardy guests.

These visitors "from the House," as Mariko called them, rarely spoke loudly, although occasionally Sumiko would hear angry voices, both men's and women's, issuing from the room across the hall. At first she was terrified when she heard them shout: "The police are coming!" "Push forward!" "Kill the spies!" One of the maids usually sat listening at the door, and as soon as she heard shouts of "police" and "spies" she calmly went downstairs to set out the visitors' shoes—she knew that the rehearsal would soon be over.

The Nisei, Freddy, usually came late at night and did not stay long. Mariko warned Sumiko to keep out of his sight; he must not know that she was there or that the ABCC was interested in her.

One evening, just before the New Year, Freddy came just when Mariko was rehearsing with her group from the House of Culture. She received him in the tiny room next door to Sumiko's, and a few minutes later she came in to Sumiko looking distraught.

"We must let the others know at once," she said in a hurried whisper. "Freddy says the police are planning to raid the city committee of the Communist Party and the headquarters of the Railwaymen's Union. He has something else to tell us and he wants someone to come over from the House of Culture. I can't go just now, and I don't like to leave him here alone . . . I have a rehearsal with the girls from the women's medical courses. Tsumoto and Irie ought to be in the House tonight, and Ryukichi too. He returned yesterday."

"I shall go," said Sumiko.

She took her trousers out of the wardrobe. As she did so the pass given her by the American professor fell out of her pocket. She stuffed it back again. Mariko shook her head.

"It is too dangerous for you to go. I had better leave him here and go myself."

"I am ready," said Sumiko, putting on an influenza mask. "You can't leave the Nisei here alone."

"Sumi-chan has a patch at the back of her trousers. You'd better put on a pair of mine. I have several more pairs."

She went out and brought a new pair of black trousers. Sumiko quickly changed into them. Mariko insisted that she put on her coat, for it had begun to snow.

As she was going downstairs, Sumiko heard a droning voice from Mariko's room:

"The cry of the crane no longer awakens the echoes on the meadow, and the June beetles buzz no more among the lime trees. It is cold, cold, desolate and dreary. . . ."

4

The gates of the houses on Mariko's street were already decorated for the New Year with bamboo sticks and pine branches. The main street, too, with its dazzling window displays and blaze of lights, wore a festive air.

Sumiko got off the tramcar near the post office and walked past the women who loitered in the shadow of the trees. They too wore influenza masks, which they pulled down when some prospective customer passed by.

Fried sweet potato vendors cried their wares outside Paradise Saloon. They were kept busy chasing away the swarms of street urchins and shoe-blacks who hovered around, attracted by the warmth and delicious smell.

The shacks on the common were gone; all that remained of them were small piles of refuse. A row of broken barrels stood in a corner of the common near the House. The first thing Sumiko saw when she entered the hallway was a new notice which said that a "bonenkai," or New Year's party would be held the following evening with the participation of the musical ensemble of the Pedagogical Institute. Entrance free, bring your own refreshments.

Sumiko pushed open the door and halted on the threshold. The kerosene lamp suspended from the ceiling lit up the figures of two girls locked in fierce struggle. Around the walls sat a number of other girls watching the match. A middle-aged woman of athletic build, with a large bulging forehead and a severe expression on her face, rapped out curt commands: "Now then Asako, keep your back straight!"

A girl who was adding wood to the little stove looked up as Sumiko entered and asked her whether she had come to the class.

"I'm looking for Tsumoto-san or Irie-san. . . ."

"Second door on the left," said the girl.

At that moment one of the girls who had been wrestling fell at Sumiko's feet with a faint groan. She picked herself up at once and rubbed her side vigorously. In a flash her opponent had leapt at her and got her down on the floor again. The instructress nodded approvingly to the victor.

Sumiko stepped out into the hallway and knocked at the second door. Hearing no response, she pushed it open and entered. Through a cloud of tobacco smoke she saw the shaggy-haired youth wearing a blond moustache and a large pair of spectacles without lenses.

"Irie-san?" Sumiko inquired and bowed.

A man who had been sitting with his back to the door turned round.

"Ryu-chan!" cried Sumiko, pulling off her influenza mask.

Ryukichi sprang up, overturning the chair, and seized her hands. He had grown very thin and there were dark circles under his eyes.

Sumiko quickly recounted the news Freddy had brought, but Ryukichi, his eyes glued to her face, heard nothing and she had to repeat her story.

"Run to Tsumoto and tell him, and I'll go to Mariko at once," he said to Irie when the significance of the news finally brought him down to earth.

Irie tore off his false whiskers and spectacles and dashed out of the room. Ryukichi donned a cap and scarf, and Sumiko adjusted her mask and they hurried out after Irie. They dropped into a call box on the way and Sumiko, at Ryukichi's instructions, telephoned Mariko to tell her friend to come down into the street in fifteen minutes' time and turn right toward the chemist's shop. It was better to meet on the street than inside the house, which might be watched. It was risky to trust that Nisei too much.

Mariko answered that her aunt was very tired and had gone home. She had promised to drop in later in the week.

Ryukichi did not like that answer. It struck him as suspicious that the Nisei should have gone off after having asked for someone to come over from the House to receive an important message. He decided to see Sumiko home and make sure that everything was all right.

He looked across the street.

"We'd better stay on this side, there are some plain-clothes men hanging about over there."

As they were walking past the little garden opposite the post office, Sumiko nudged Ryukichi with her elbow.

"It wasn't nice of Ryu-chan not to let me know he had returned," she said.

"I only came back yesterday. But I have heard all about Sumi-chan already. I heard she had been ill. I thought I'd see Mariko tomorrow and get her to take me to Sumi-chan."

"I don't believe it!" said Sumiko, turning her face away. "I'm sure Tokyo is full of beautiful, well educated girls, much more interesting to talk to than me."

"How does Sumi-chan know I was in Tokyo?"

"I went to the fortune-teller and he told me. He gave me a straw doll and I wrote on it the name of a nasty man I know and I stuck pins into it every day. . . ."

A car with two Americans in it was standing at the kerb further down the street and a Japanese policeman was pacing up and down beside it; Ryukichi put his arm round Sumiko and pressed his face to hers as they passed the car.

"The police and plain-clothes men can stop anyone they please," said Ryukichi when he finally released her—long after the danger was past. "But they rarely bother drunks and lovers." He looked into her face. "I'm going to work in town now. I shall lodge with Irie's relatives over near the river pier."

"I wish I didn't have to live at Mariko-san's place all the time. But she says it is the safest place just now."

"I am going to work in a print-shop. If Sumi-chan agrees . . . we can live together. I can't live without Sumi-chan."

She hung her head and her hand crept up to her neck.

"I am ill."

"Sumi-chan will get well soon."

"Suppose my uncle opposes it. What if he gets angry and sells me like Yae-chan's father sold her. Where is she now?"

"She is working," he replied. "Underground. The police are after her. So if you should ever chance to see her anywhere you must on no account speak to her or give any sign of recognition. Otherwise Yae-chan will be arrested."

"What if Ryu-chan has to go into hiding as well . . . I am so frightened."

He took her hand.

"We must be prepared for everything. After all Sumi-chan is in hiding too. The Americans have already notified the police, perhaps the police have been given a description of you. You must be very careful."

Ryukichi exercised extreme caution throughout the journey. Each time they had to pass a policeman or American soldiers he would stagger along drunkenly, hugging Sumiko close, cheek to cheek. Besides the uniformed police they had to be on the lookout for plain-clothes men of whom there were a surprising number prowling about. Ryukichi did not relax until they were close to Mariko's house. Sumiko thought him a whit too careful.

"I'm afraid Ryu-chan has been spoiled by his stay in Tokyo," remarked Sumiko, straightening her influenza mask which had been pushed askew. "He is as bad as the Amis. . . ."

Ryukichi said he would wait outside and watch Mariko's windows. If all was well, Sumiko should come to the window and wave her hand.

"Or you can do this," he said slyly, pinching himself on the neck.

"No," said Sumiko, "I shall do this," and she laid her fingers against her ears. "Do I look like a fox?"

"Yes, the sweetest little fox in the world," he said. He looked down the street: "I think the police are coming. . . ."

But this time she slapped his hand and sprang aside.

"It's not true. Ryu-chan has forgotten how to behave. I shall ask Mariko to take me to the House and let me join that class where they learn to do this," she waved her fists. "I saw them today. They're learning to protect themselves from the Amis."

"You mean karate. Yes, all women ought to learn it. But I don't think Sumiko ought to go out much. It's far too risky."

"I shall go only in the evenings and keep my face covered. Will Ryu-chan come and see me on New Year's? We ground rice all day yesterday and prepared all sorts of nice things to eat. . . ." She slapped her cheeks.

Ryu-chan shook his head and looked sad; he was going away again tomorrow and would not be back for a month.

"Are you going far?" Sumiko asked in a trembling voice.

He nodded.

"Can't we go together?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Is it dangerous?"

He showed her the palm of his right hand. "See that life line?" he said. "I shall live to be a hundred and twenty. So there's nothing to worry about. As soon as I get back I shall go to Sumi-chan's uncle, sit myself down in the middle of his yard and stay there until he gives his consent."

She gave him a long look, bowed her head and darted through the little door in the fence.

She found Mariko lying on the sofa near the bookcase. She said Freddy had gone because he was afraid to be late for work. He had learned from an officer recently returned from Tokyo that the treaty based on the Mutual Security Act giving the Americans the right to build military bases on Japanese territory was about to be signed. As soon as that happened the Americans would begin extending Enola. He promised to try and obtain some more information and pass it on.

"Why did he want someone to come over from the House?"

"He thought I would have to hurry away to warn the others about the police, and he wanted someone else to come and hear his report about the plan to expand the base and to find out what other information we wanted."

Sumiko went over to the window, opened it and laid her fingers against her ears. A low whistle answered her from the darkness. She nodded her head, closed the window and pulled down the blind.

"Who saw you home?" Mariko asked in a strangely muffled voice.

Sumiko ran over to her, threw her arms around her and put her cheek against hers. It was wet.

"Why is Mari-chan crying?"

Mariko bit her handkerchief.

"I asked Freddy about . . . Yukio. He promised to find out the cause of his death."

Sumiko glanced quickly over the photograph with the little vase of flowers beside it.

"Is that him?" she whispered.

Mariko buried her face in the pillow and her shoulders shook. Sumiko sat for a long time beside the couch staring before her.

5

Because the police in Japan were trained in ju-jutsu and most of the Americans there knew how to use their fists, Japanese patriots had to learn how to defend themselves and the best method was karate.

This is a native Ryukyu art which originated centuries ago as a systematized development of the chuanfa, or Chinese fisticuffs.

Karate has advantages over ju-jutsu and boxing since, in addition to blows with the fist, the palm and the side of the hand, it includes training in the use of the elbow, the knee and the foot. Anyone skilled at karate can defend himself against every conceivable form of attack. It is primarily an art of self-defence through attack.

Karate is especially useful for women, inasmuch as sheer physical strength plays no greater role in it than agility, quick-wittedness, cunning. The ability to outwit the opponent, to draw him out and make feints that expose his most vulnerable spots to the decisive blow is the main requirement, and in this respect, at least, Nature has not left women lacking.

There is a story that one of the finest karate fighters of last century was a young girl, Itone Tsuru. The whole kingdom of Ryukyu rang with her fame. Only one man was her match—Matsumura, the karate champion of the time. Their contest ended in a draw. He fell in love with her and married her, and whenever they quarrelled—as married couples do—he

would run out of the house and take it out on passers-by. That, at any rate, was the story the karate instructress, a brawny muscular woman from Okinawa, was fond of telling her pupils, supplementing the tale each time with fresh details.

To join the karate class one had to have the permission of a doctor from the Kondo clinic, and it was with some misgivings that Sumiko went to Dr. Nakaya for an examination. To her surprise she did not raise any objections.

"It won't do you any harm to go in for sport. I would have preferred some less strenuous form, but"—she rubbed her temple—"these are troubled times and it can't be helped."

6

Sumiko had been attending the karate class for nearly three months. She was one of a group of twelve girls who trained several times a week in the evenings.

The instructress took her work very seriously. She was determined to make tough fighters out of her pupils and to that end she ruled over them with an iron hand. When demonstrating a hold, she would throw them so hard that even the soft straw matting did not save them from getting bruised. Not infrequently a pupil would break down and cry, and the brawny instructress would console her with her favourite proverb: "The tree of patience bears golden fruit."

But since that tree required frequent watering, a barrel of water had been placed in a corner of the room with a towel beside it for compresses. Near the barrel was the "field hospital," a wide straw mattress where the casualties were placed in charge of a nurse from the Kondo clinic who was always on duty during the lessons.

No one dared to protest against the instructress' methods of training. If taxed on that score, she would say that was how she had been taught and how she had trained members of the democratic women's organizations in Osaka and Aomori who had long studied the art of self-defence.

After the class had been given the general principles of karate, and before passing on to fighting in a prone position and learning to hit with the side of the palm, the instructress held a training contest.

It was just on the eve of International Women's Day. The girls had given the premises a thorough cleaning, washing the floors and walls, filling all the cracks in the ceiling and changing the paper on the windows. It was decided to hold the contest in the meeting hall, a long room with three windows. A carpet made of sacks replaced the old straw matting on the floor. Beside the instructress on the referees' bench sat pupils from the senior group, fully conscious of their importance. Behind them were the audience. Ordinarily the instructress would not allow any men to be present when the women's groups were training, the only exception being made for Iketani, the student who was in charge of all educational activities at the House. This evening, however, the men had been permitted to attend on condition they would not smoke or pass any rude remarks about the contestants.

Sumiko was in the third bout. Her opponent was a tall, angular, left-handed girl called Matsuko, and to deal with a left-handed opponent

required particular skill. Matsuko began by attempting to seize Sumiko by the waist, but Sumiko warded her off with her right hand and leapt to one side. Matsuko put out her foot and all but tripped her, then seized her arm and twisted it. Sumiko working with her elbow tore herself loose, but before she had time to regain her balance Matsuko kicked her feet from under her.

"Good for Matsuko!" shouted the workers from the cement mill where Matsuko worked.

But the young men and women from the chemical fertilizer factory and the railway shops at the back withheld their applause. The instructress ordered the contestants to carry on: Matsuko had done well, but not well enough to win the decision.

As Sumiko got up and straightened her trousers the girls from her theatre circle shouted to her in chorus: "Sumi-chan, hold on!"

Matsuko attacked at once. Feinting, she threw out her left arm, seized hold of Sumiko's belt and drew her to herself. Sumiko tried to counter with her knee, but it was too late. She crashed down on her back—it all happened so fast that she did not have time even to put out her hand to break the force of the fall.

While the cement workers clapped their hands and roared in approval, the winner went over to Sumiko lying near the water barrel to help her to her feet, but the instructress stopped her.

"Let her get up herself," she barked. "She ought to have learned how to fall by now. Stupid!"

7

After she had rested a while in the "field hospital," Sumiko went outside, sat down on a boulder and rubbed her aching back. The sound of footsteps and whispering brought her quickly to her feet. Two figures were stealthily approaching the House. Sumiko stepped forward, her fists up.

"Who's that?"

It was Mariko's voice. Behind her stood Freddy in a hat pushed down over his eyes and the collar of his coat upturned. He raised two fingers to his hat brim.

"Freddy has brought some very important news," Mariko whispered.

They went inside. Sumiko looked through the window which was half covered with newspaper. The contest appeared to be nearly over. The instructress was puffing at a long pipe and had permitted the men to smoke.

In the dimly lit entrance Tsumoto was conversing in low tones with Mariko and Freddy. When Sumiko appeared, he stopped speaking and stepped in front of the Nisei, but Mariko said:

"It's all right, Sumiko-san knows Freddy."

Tsumoto went over to the first door on the left.

"The self-education circles are meeting this evening but this room will soon be free, I think, as soon as the lecture is over."

He opened the door slightly. The room was full of young men and women seated cross-legged on the floor with copy-books and note pads.

"Bonfires lighted by the rebels began to blaze at night on the hills around French-occupied Hanoi," the lecturer was saying. "The Vietnamese patriots were led by the popular hero De Tam. And in 1894, the year the Sino-Japanese War broke out, the French were compelled to start negotiations. . . ."

Tsumoto closed the door. Several young men with textbooks under their arms came out of the next room, followed by a long-haired student in glasses, who was wiping the chalk off his hands with his handkerchief.

"Finished?" asked Mariko.

"Yes," said the student. "And please tell Iketani to see that I get this same room the day after tomorrow, or he'll go and stick me in with those caterwaulers from the choir circle."

Tsumoto ushered Freddy and Mariko into the room and told Sumiko to come in and guard the door.

Between the posters and maps that lined the walls hung accordions, mandolins and a triangular three-stringed instrument with a shorter neck: Irie's elder brother who had been a prisoner of war in Siberia for some years played that instrument very well. Freddy ran his eyes over the room, his short hands thrust into his coat pockets. He was visibly nervous.

"The information you gave us about the police raids was confirmed," said Tsumoto, with a brief bow. "We're much obliged."

"That was nothing," said Freddy and saluted. "About that other business," he added, turning to Mariko. "I'll try to find out what I can. It is not easy."

"That's about Yashuji and Toshio. . . . I asked Freddy to find out what they died of," Mariko explained.

Freddy glanced at the door where Sumiko stood and dropped his voice to a whisper:

"I heard at the aerodrome yesterday that the 315th is to be sent to Indo-China soon, and the 18th . . ."

Tsumoto stopped him. "We are not interested in military secrets."

"I see . . ." Freddy coughed into his hand. "About extending the base, First Lieutenant Rockham, Colonel Younghusband's former aide told me in confidence they intend setting up a radar station after they build a highway up to Tunnel Hill. I shall try to get more details."

Tsumoto looked Freddy straight in the eye.

"You're taking a big risk, aren't you? If you're found out, it will be too bad for you."

"I'll be court-martialled, of course," Freddy ran a finger across his throat and clicked his tongue expressively.

"You'd better not come here any more," said Tsumoto. "The police have raided this place twice and they're liable to come again at any moment."

Freddy lowered his eyes. There was a brief silence. Then, with his eyes still averted, he said hoarsely:

"I have only one wish—to be of some assistance to you, to the cause. I know you don't quite trust me, and I can't blame you. After all, I am an American soldier. But the Americans treat us Niseis no better than Negroes. They call us Japs, yellow monkeys and other names too foul to repeat." He uttered a sound like a smothered sob, pulled out his handkerchief and quickly dabbed his eyes. "The day before yesterday they got drunk and beat up a Japanese typist. I tried to stop them but one of the sergeants knocked me down."

"Where did he hit you?" Sumiko asked with professional curiosity.

"It was terrible . . ." Freddy went on, pulling at his handkerchief. "The dirty swine!"

"Did he hit you here?" Sumiko asked pointing her fist at her chin. Tsumoto looked sternly at her and she covered her mouth with her hand. Freddy turned away, wiped his eyes, shook back his hair and lit a cigarette. After a while he calmed down and went over to a poster hanging beside the blackboard. It showed a girl pointing to a helmeted soldier holding a bazooka and it bore the words: "We won't marry security officers!"

"That's a swell poster," Freddy remarked, and, pointing to the signature in the corner added: "The other day I heard some CIC officers in the officers' club arguing about Katsu Gengo. Some said it was the real name of a Japanese Communist who came over recently from North Korea on a special mission, others claimed it was not the name of any one man but a code name, a sort of secret slogan. Lieutenant O'Reen of the military police said the Japanese police have been looking for Katsu Gengo for a long time, but so many of the people they arrest give their names as Katsu Gengo they don't know what to think. And new drawings and verses signed by him appear all the time. . . ."

Tsumoto laughed.

"Yes, he's an elusive chap. He has a thousand arms and legs."

"A clever idea that, everybody calling themselves Katsu to put the police off the scent. But still . . ." Freddy glanced over at the door, "... a lot of people do know him and sooner or later someone may give him away."

Tsumoto and Mariko exchanged glances. Mariko dropped her eyes.

"Oh, he's not afraid of anybody," Tsumoto said with a smile. "He goes about quite openly. He even comes here occasionally."

"Well, that's a big mistake," said Freddy looking grave. "He oughtn't to take the risk." He glanced at his wrist watch and bowed. "Well, I must be going."

"I'll go ahead and see that the road is clear," said Mariko.

When they had left, Tsumoto paced up and down the room in silence. Presently he stopped beside Sumiko.

"Do you like that Nisei?" he asked her.

"I don't know," she made a little face. "They beat him up over there and he comes here and sheds tears. He's just a sniveller if you ask me."

Tsumoto shook his head. "That's not true. If he were he would never have the courage to come here. He knows how dangerous it is. Besides, he has told us the truth. He brought some more important information today. It wasn't exactly news to us, but just the same it confirmed our own information. That shows he isn't lying." Tsumoto rubbed the back of his neck. "Just the same I can't stomach the man, for some reason."

"The bouts will be over soon," said Sumiko. "Were you there?"

"Yes, and by the way I have regards for you from a certain young man." Tsumoto narrowed his eyes. "He will soon come home and he is quite well. I ought to have told you this before the fight—perhaps you would have made a better showing. Stupid!" he added sticking out his lips in imitation of the instructress.

Sumiko laughed and ran out into the hallway; then, assuming an air of gravity, walked slowly into the room where the bouts were still going on.

When the programme was over, the members of all the circles at the House were called to a special meeting to hear an important announcement. An American-Japanese agreement based on the Mutual Security Act was to be signed in Tokyo the next day, and at the same time the Japanese government would sanction the enlargement of the Enola Base. The Americans had decided to extend it beyond the round rock in order to lay a concrete highway as far as Tunnel Hill. They had already come to terms with Sakuma and Yugeh and the owner of Monkey Forest as regards compensation for the land earmarked for requisitioning.

After this announcement, an appeal issued by the Committee of Action against the expansion of Enola Base was read out. The Committee had been set up a few hours before at a meeting of the peasants of the Old, Eastern and New villages called on the initiative of the local Communist Party organization and the United Youth group of the three villages.

The Committee of Action appealed to all organizations supporting the united democratic front of national liberation to come to the aid of the three villages.

Having heard the appeal, the meeting resolved to send at once a delegation to discuss counter measures with the committee. There and then volunteers were signed up for action groups, cultural brigades and teams of canvassers for donations.

And on the wall, next to the announcement board, a large sheet of paper appeared bearing these words in big red letters: "THE FIGHT IS ON!"

The shack on the common was deserted. For a time all club activity—the study groups, sewing circle, karate and flower circles—had been suspended. A small number of club members spent a few hours every evening attending to current business; the rest of the time the House of Culture was left in charge of the caretaker's wife from the warehouse next door.

The leaflets and magazines were printed at Irie's house, not far from the railwaymen's hostel; the posters were made at Iketani's place and in Kumada's photo studio which was in the same building as the Kondo clinic. The theatre and choir circles met at Dr. Nakaya's flat: the group collecting donations had its headquarters on the premises of the posts and telegraph workers' union, and the paper theatre circle directed by Mariko, rehearsed in the home of the cement mill worker Matsuko who occupied a tiny shack of a house next door to a monastery. Mariko's flat was left in reserve.

Sumiko continued to attend Mariko's circle. They were now working on a repertoire for the cultural brigades and were competing with the lantern slide group who were making slides adapted from *How the Steel Was Tempered*, a novel by the Russian writer Nikolai Ostrovsky, and *Vacuum Zone*, by the Japanese author Noma.

One evening when they were beginning to rehearse on a play entitled "Bukiti and the Military Base," Mariko discovered that she had left some of the pictures at home, and she asked Sumiko to go and fetch them.

It was around nine o'clock in the evening. As she stepped off the tram-car at the corner of Mariko's street, Sumiko was nearly run over by a jeep.



It pulled up sharply with a grinding of brakes and the frightened face of the Negro driver looked out. Sumiko leapt on to the pavement in front of the mat-maker's shop, colliding with an American in army uniform passing by on the pavement. He caught her arm to steady her and uttered a brief exclamation of surprise. She had just time to catch a glimpse of a florid complexion and bushy grey eyebrows before she darted away and dashed up the hill as fast as she could. The American shouted "Stop!" and something else she did not catch, the jeep blew a long blast on its horn, and its headlights swept over the gates of the houses lining the street and over a lorry loaded with rubble toiling up the hill. With the horn still blaring

behind her, Sumiko ran on breathlessly, not stopping until she reached Mariko's gate. She tore it open, slammed it behind her and shot the bolt. The blaring of the horn continued and the lorry's engine roared—evidently it could not move fast enough to make room for the infuriated jeep behind. Finally she heard the jeep tear past the house to the end of the street and turn the corner.

Before venturing out into the street again, Sumiko asked the servant to see whether there was a jeep standing there. The servant reported that there was no jeep in sight. Nevertheless Sumiko did not take the risk of going down the hill to the tram stop. Muffling herself up to her eyes in her scarf, she went up the hill and turned into another quiet street lined with private houses over the brick walls of which the tops of neatly clipped trees were visible. This street brought her to the tram stop near the Niagara Dance Hall.

There had evidently been no trams for some time because the one she boarded was jammed full. More passengers came on at the stop near a department store and added to the congestion. Pushing her way through to the exit, Sumiko accidentally bumped into a slim woman wearing a rain cape and hood and an influenza mask. The woman glanced at her and turned away, then looked again, this time more closely. As the tram swung round the sharp corner near the station, the woman swayed and reached for the strap. In doing so her hand brushed against her hood and her mask slipped down revealing a pair of narrow eyes, one eyebrow slightly shorter than the other, and a birthmark on her left cheek. Sumiko opened her mouth and shut it again quickly and began pinching her neck. The woman looked at her out of the corner of her eye, straightened her mask and turned her face away. Sumiko watched her left hand come slowly down, saw her bunch her fingers and lay them for an instant inside the palm of her right hand. Sumiko turned so that she stood sideways and making sure that no one was watching them, nudged Yaeko lightly with her elbow. The other responded. They stood thus, pressed close to each other until the tram stopped on the square in front of the market. Yaeko looked at her friend, moved her eyebrows in mute farewell and went out of the tram.

As she turned into the little alley where Matsuko lived, Sumiko saw a policeman pacing up and down beside a sweet-potato stand. Three men were standing in the middle of the street smoking. One of them jerked his head in Sumiko's direction and they walked slowly toward her. She raised her scarf to her eyes and whispered rapidly to herself: "Marishiten Monjubosatsu." The man in the lead stopped short, yawned and stretched himself and headed for a beer saloon. The other two followed him, whistling a gay tune.

When Mariko heard of Sumiko's encounter with the American professor, she threw up her hands in horror.

"How awful! He must have seen you entering the house and he'll notify the police. . . ."

"I don't think he had time to see what house I entered."

"They can have the street watched . . . and wait for Sumiko to come out. And if Freddy comes they'll catch him."

"Sumiko will stay here with me," said Matsuko firmly. "I shan't let her go anywhere."

Mariko looked at Matsuko who sat with her legs crossed like a man.

Her face, with its prominent cheekbones and dark eyebrows, wore a determined look.

"If Sumi-chan is here I shall not worry," said Mariko with a smile. "But don't let her out on any account. Use force if need be. I shall bring Sumi-chan work from the shop."

10

Matsuko lived alone. Her mother had gone blind as a result of injuries sustained in an air raid and had died the previous year. Matsuko shared the little shack with three workers' families. Their front doors looked out on a street as narrow as a corridor, and each family had a tiny backyard adjoining the brick wall of the monastery and separated from one another by fences knocked together out of old crates.

Matsuko left the house early in the morning for the mill and returned in the evening in time for the class. Sumiko sat alone all day making toys or drawing pictures for the plays. Sometimes she made kites for the toy-shop down the street—painting the red giant Kintoki or Enma, the bearded ruler of Hades, on large sheets of paper.

As soon as the repertoire was ready, the members of the theatre circle formed groups which began touring the factory towns and villages in the district together with the cultural brigades. Mariko left with a brigade made up of girls from a canning factory then on strike, several unemployed factory hands, and students from the Pedagogical Institute. Before leaving, she brought Sumiko the reassuring news that her street was not being watched. Evidently Sumiko had succeeded in putting the Americans off the scent that time.

"What about Freddy?" she inquired. "Perhaps I ought to keep in touch with him?"

"You're not stepping out of this house," declared Matsuko firmly, banging her fist on her knee. "You stay where you are."

"Freddy will be in touch with someone else while I am away," Mariko added.

Now that the paper theatre circle members had dispersed, Matsuko joined a team of canvassers for donations. Every day after work she dropped in at the House and got all the latest news from the club members on duty there.

One day she came home with the news that the Americans had started an offensive. They had pulled down the shacks opposite the round rock and occupied the section up to the bamboo grove near the Yugeh estate. But that was as far as they had been allowed to go. The inhabitants of Old and East villages had formed defence squads which had seated themselves on the ground in a solid line several rows deep that stretched from the foot of Yugeh Hill all the way to the reservoir. The Peace Line it was called.

Defence squads had been organized at New Village as well, and a round-the-clock vigil had been instituted on the Peace Line. The sitters were changed every six hours. Everyone was joining the defence units, not only the young folk but elderly men and women as well.

Word of the action taken by the population of the three villages had spread rapidly all over Japan. The Committee of Struggle had been receiving letters and telegrams from all parts of the country. A movement to

collect donations had been started in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya, Kyoto and other cities, and parcels of food and clothing had begun to arrive. The *Red Banner*, the Communist Party newspaper, had put out a special issue devoted to Japanese resistance to the establishment of foreign military bases in Japan.

Katsu Gengo had announced that he had taken his place on the Peace Line.

Japanese policemen in full battle array had taken up positions near the round rock alongside American military police and troops. In reply to the police orders to disperse, the sitters had waved mat banners and set up a whistling on conch shells. At night they lighted torches.

The police hesitated to resort to violence, for reinforcements had arrived on the Peace Line—the wood-cutters and charcoal burners from the surrounding hills, workers from the dam and the stone quarries and a detachment from the city committee of the Communist Party which included a group of Left Socialists.

In the beginning many villagers had believed the Elder and his stooges who went around saying that the Red trouble makers had started the whole affair and were taking advantage of it for their own ends. The Elder tried to hide the truth in a fog of lies as the cuttlefish hides behind the black ink it ejects. The bulletin *Our Fight*, put out by the Committee of Struggle, and Katsu Gengo's pamphlet *Facts Against Lies* brought the truth to the peasants. The enemies were those who had come from overseas to trample Japanese soil with their jeeps and tanks, and all those who cringed and fawned before the invaders. But those who were helping the peasants in their fight for justice were their true friends.

11

All that day Sumiko had been feeling out of sorts. She had been troubled by stabbing pains in her shoulder during the night and ever since morning her head and back ached as if she had worked the whole previous day planting rice. She took several of the reddish pills Dr. Nakaya had given her and she bound a damp towel around her head. She had no heart for her work. She laid aside the toy fans she was making out of gold and silver paper and she turned to the chipped mirror that stood on the trunk. She saw a woe-begone face and part of a neck pinched black and blue.

Nobody cared about her. Here she was sitting all alone in her cubby-hole forgotten by everyone. He had come back. Matsuko had seen him the day before yesterday at the House. He must know where she was, but he did not come. That meant he too had no time for her now. They had all abandoned her, it seemed. How she longed to join one of the cultural brigades on their tour. She would have given anything to go. Besides, everyone said she did the Bukiti play and the little dog Tibi sketch better than anyone else. But they hadn't taken her; they said it was risky, for the police often attacked the cultural brigades and anyone they caught was in danger of being turned over to the Americans. More than that, the cultural brigades had anything but an easy time while on tour. They had to walk long distances, to sleep anywhere and eat whatever they could get. In short only a healthy person could stand the life and Doctor Nakaya would never permit her to go. So she was no good for anything; nobody needed her and she might as well be dead for all the good she was doing. What was it

Takami had said? "We only seem to be alive, but we're only dolls stuffed with ashes." Takami was right.

She sat for a long while staring into the mirror. Beside her on the mat lay a pile of newspapers full of stories about an incident that stirred the whole Japanese nation to indignant protest. At dawn on March first the Americans had exploded a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific. Five hours after the test a shower of ashes had fallen upon a Japanese fishing boat, the *Fukuryu maru*, 288 kilometers from the centre of the explosion. The ashes were radio-active and the entire crew of 23 men had been taken to hospital on arrival in Japan with symptoms of pernicious anaemia. Their entire catch had also been poisoned by the "death ashes." American doctors from the ABCC had insisted on being allowed to study the cases. A Professor Eisenbad had flown over from the United States to determine the degree of radio-activity in fish found in the vicinity of the shores of Japan after the explosion of the bomb. An American fish canning firm had suspended the import of Japanese fish to America. All this was described in great detail in the newspapers.

The room gradually darkened. Sumiko licked her dry lips. Her tongue was blue-black from the pills. She got up wearily and started clearing away the strips of coloured paper.

An automobile horn sounded near by. There was a loud shout down in the alley, the door burst open and Matsuko came running into the room in a state of great excitement.

"Security police are getting ready to attack the Peace Line," she related breathlessly. "A detachment of them arrived early this morning. Our factory has declared a three-day solidarity strike. We're all going off there. The lorries are waiting outside."

She snatched her canvas bag off its hook and quickly stuffed her scarf, tooth-brush, soap and mouth-organ inside.

"I've telephoned the clinic and told them that Sumi-chan is ill. Nakaya-san will be here soon. She said you were to go to bed."

Sumiko got up without a word, slipped on a short kimono and trousers and pulled out a folder with pictures for the play "Bukiti and Ameske" from under the table. Matsuko gaped at her in astonishment.

"Where are you going?"

Sumiko did not reply. She pinned her blue-red badge on her kimono, made a little parcel of her scarf and tooth-brush, threw her coat over her shoulders and stooped down to tie on her sandals. Matsuko ran outside and tried to lock the door, but Sumiko forced it open.

"Don't you dare go out!" shouted Matsuko. "You fool!"

Sumiko gave her a violent push and dashed down the street, hugging her folder to her. In front of the workers' hostel she saw three lorries packed with people wearing white headbands and carrying streamers and flags, red and blue-and-red. A swarm of cyclists hovered around the lorries.

"Sumiko-san!" someone shouted from the first lorry. "Come here!"

Iketani wearing his student's cap and with an accordion over his shoulder waved to her from the top of the lorry. He stretched out his hand to help her up, but at that moment someone called to her from the next lorry. She turned and ran toward the voice. Ryukichi stretched both hands to her and pulled her up into the lorry.

"Hold on to me or you'll fall out," he said. She took his hand. Irie hauled up the sturdy Matsuko. When she saw Ryukichi, Matsuko opened

her mouth to say something, but Sumiko shook her fist at her and showed the tip of her blackened tongue.

The lorries moved off. With the cyclists forming the vanguard and a red flag marked "Third Action Unit of the Democratic Youth League" waving from the head lorry, they made an impressive procession. Iketani struck up a tune on the accordion. Irie raised the megaphone to his lips and started to sing a merry song, and the narrow street echoed to its strains. Ryukichi too joined in the refrain and squeezed Sumiko's hand tight. She covered their hands with her folder.

PEACE LINE

1

On arrival at Kurotani the column split up. The cyclists led by Ryukichi headed for the railway on the other side of the river and thence to the soya bean factory. Ryukichi made Sumiko promise not to take any unnecessary risks if trouble should start. He would come over to the front line in a few days and would look for her in the fourth cultural brigade to which Iketani had assigned her. But it would be best if she would go back to town the next day; it was much safer for her there.

Sumiko tossed her head and climbed back into the lorry. It was late at night when they finally reached East Village. The lorries unloaded their passengers at Inari Woods and went straight back to town. Matsuko got some straw and made a comfortable bed under the trees. The young men brought brushwood from Monkey Forest and built fires on the meadow.

At daybreak they set out for Chestnut Hill. Its foothills were wreathed in mist. Here and there pink cherry-blossoms showed through the white shroud. Iketani, with a red arm-band indicating that he was captain of the detachment, and a white band on his head in place of his student's cap, marched ahead of the column with a lad in blue overalls who carried the detachment flag.

From the roof of the school building hung a streamer with the inscription: "Japan for the Japanese! Down with MSA! Away with military bases!" A notice on the wall of Otoye's house said: "The Students' Domestic Aid Brigade offers its services to the families of Peace Line Defenders. We can help you with field work and household chores. Don't hesitate to call on us!" Outside the house stood wheelbarrows and wooden barrels, and bundles of string, mattocks and spades piled on straw mats.

On either side of the traffic signal at the narrow section of the road stretched rows of white tents decorated with pine branches. A white flag with a red cross in the middle flew from the top of a small rock and beside it a streamer with the words: "Action Group, Kondo Democratic Clinic and Women's Medical Course Students."

A bevy of young girls in white nurses' caps and smocks came running out of the tents as the column marched up and waved to the newcomers. Iketani snatched the megaphone from Irie's hand and shouted: "Thanks for the greeting but we shall try to give you a wide berth!"

Further on, under the cherry trees, were canteens flying the blue flags of the Democratic Women's Association. Women in European dresses and white aprons were busy rolling rice into balls, chopping seaweed and pickled radish and watching over the saucepans that stood on the small clay stoves.

The new arrivals settled themselves on the grass and were given a bowl of soya bean soup and some millet mush each. As soon as they had breakfasted, they continued on their way. A small hut plastered with coloured posters appeared between the trees. Newspapers and books were laid out on boxes in front of the hut. A thin, long-haired young man, sitting crosslegged on a large tree stump beside the news-stand, shouted: "Latest from Tokyo—*New Japanese Literature, The New Woman, New Epoch*. Stories and poems about Enola! *Our Banner, Little Flame, Resistance* and *The Ant*, April issues."

It was Yasaku. Sumiko ran over to greet him. At that moment the round, sun-tanned face of Ineko appeared in the doorway of the hut. She cried out, dropped the pile of newspapers she was carrying and rushed over to her friend.

She had come back three days ago, she told Sumiko. She had been living with her aunt in a village thirty *ri* away and as soon as she had heard the news over the radio she had told her aunt there had been an earthquake in New Village and she must go home at once. She ran part of the way and then a handsome young man had given her a lift to the station beyond the river. And now she was helping Yasaku to deliver newspapers, magazines and song books to the front line and the villages. She had to carry everything on her back because they couldn't get a hand-cart, though she kept nagging Yasaku all the time about it. Yasaku had told her all about Sumi-chan and she had been terribly worried about her, terribly.

Ineko jumped up and down, waving her arms in excitement.

"Look," she said, pulling a crumpled booklet out of her kimono. "Read it and pass it on. Let everyone read it, it's a wonderful poem. I know it by heart but it still brings tears to my eyes."

On the coarse grey paper cover of the booklet Sumiko read the stencilled words: "*For the Happiness of Mankind*, a collection of verses by Najima Hikomatsu. Published by the literary section of the Committee of Struggle."

Ineko glanced over at Yasaku and dropped her voice to a whisper: "That's the name Yasaku is writing under now. He chose it because it resembles the name of a famous Turkish revolutionary poet. Only don't tell anyone . . . it's a secret."

She stopped talking as Yasaku got off the tree stump to engage in a heated altercation with Heiske, who had appeared on the scene.

"They're always scrapping," said Ineko calmly. "I'm used to it by now. Hei-chan is all right, he told me in confidence that Yasaku is going to be a famous poet one day."

She reached inside her kimono and produced another crumpled volume of verse by "Najima Hikomatsu," thrust it into Sumiko's hand and ran back into the hut. Yasaku climbed back on to his tree stump and shouted after Heiske's retreating figure:



"If you don't give us a hand-cart today I'll put out a leaflet exposing your inefficiency. I'll show up all you bureaucrats! Just you wait!"

Two cyclists rode up, alighted beside a large oak tree and pasted the morning bulletin of the Committee of Struggle on its trunk. At a bend in the road the square horn of a loud-speaker peeped out from between the branches of a tall pine. Young men with defence-unit arm-bands, carrying long bamboo poles, were sitting on a log under the tree listening to the broadcast. Iketani signed to the lad in the blue overalls, who thereupon raised aloft the flag he was carrying and stepped forward smartly. The others joined hands and broke into the strains of a youth song. The Peace Line began on the other side of the pinewoods.

2

They took up positions in the third row of the central sector, next to the bamboo grove. The straw spread out on the ground for the sitters was still warm. During the night one sector had been held by the girls from the telephone station who had just left for work; the railwaymen with the red flag and the home defence unit from Old Village with their mat banners replaced the auto transport workers in the first row, and to their right sat the students from the Doshisha University of Kyoto with their blue flag.

The change of sitters took place in perfect order all along the line. As soon as the take-over ended on the central sector, there was movement on the right flank at the foot of the Yugeh Hill as a youth detachment from Kuga Village near the river and a unit from the printers' union marched thither, carrying flags and placards. The whole line was gay with red and blue flags, dark yellow mat banners and white placards.

The latter were particularly numerous—their frames and staffs could be used for other purposes in case of an emergency.

With a loud buzzing noise a helicopter flew out from behind Chestnut Hill. It circled over the hill and flew off in the direction of Turtle Hill.

It was a warm bright morning. The air was still and the sky was a vast cloudless expanse except for a fuzzy white loop traced by an aeroplane far away over the sea. Bluish-green hills, touched here and there with pale pink, rose on all sides. On the fields behind the right flank of the Line women with white arm-bands and students from the domestic aid unit were ploughing the soil, and groups of children were busy picking grasses of some sort on the boundary strips. It was a scene to gladden the heart, to make one rejoice to be alive on this glorious spring day. The perfection of the day was marred only by the presence of the police and the Americans.

The police were lined up within twenty yards of the first line of sitters. They carried clubs and wore helmets. Officers paced up and down among the ranks of policemen, and the bluish-grey helmets of American MPs in jeeps could be seen behind the police lorries. From behind the trees farther back protruded the greyish-green snouts of fifteen-barrel mortars looking surprisingly like oversized packets of cigarettes. The enemy maintained an ominous silence.

Irie borrowed a pair of binoculars from someone and focussed them on the police, then turned and studied the left flank of the Line near the reservoir.

"Sumi-chan, I think there are some people from your village over there," he said, handing her the binoculars. "Right close to the brick wall."

At first she could see nothing but a greenish haze and a blur, but Irie turned a little knob for her and suddenly she found she could read the characters written in India ink on one of the mat banners: "Self-Defence Squad, New Village," it said.

She lowered the binoculars a little and saw a woman's back with a baby tied to it, another woman with a white kerchief, and farther on, Kuhei with his pipe between his teeth and straw cape; one-eyed Jinjaku, Harue's father, also smoking a pipe, long-faced Karoku, Yasaku's uncle, and at the very end of the line, Yaeko's father, leaning his bald head against a tree. The woman in the white kerchief turned and Sumiko recognized the little school janitress Otoyé. So she was here too! The woman with the baby at her back turned out to be the wife of Heiske's eldest brother. Ineko's father was there too, fanning himself with a booklet. They were all there. All except Sumiko's uncle. Perhaps he had already sat out his shift and had gone home to rest? Or perhaps he was sitting with the woodcutters from Tunnel Hill?

Sumiko turned the field glasses over to the right flank. A streamer with the words: "Amis, Keep Out!" fluttered from an oar high over the heads of the sitters in the second row: young men wearing red bandannas, some of them naked to the waist, their bronzed bodies glistening in the sun. Matao in a singlet was sitting next to the streamer. Sumiko saw Sugino walk up to Matao swaying his broad shoulders, and point toward the mulberry trees overlooking the valley.

Ineko came along with a bundle of fresh papers under her arm and a canvas bag over her shoulder. She was shouting: "*Red Banner, Peasants' Friend, The Fern*, a volume of verses! Song books!"

Sumiko called to her and she came over and sat down on the grass. The corners of her mouth drooped and she looked as if she were about to cry.

"Bad news," she whispered. "Someone just came from the soya factory and said that a gang of hooligans attacked one of our propaganda brigades and turned them over to the police. Ryu-chan was among them."

Sumiko bit her lip and trembling fingers strayed to her neck.

"We don't know all the details yet," Ineko added. "Yasaku says it may be a false rumour."

At that moment the loud-speakers broadcast an announcement:

"This evening at 7 p.m. Comrade Tsumoto from the Communist Party unit will speak on the fight waged by the population of Oshima against the building of an American military base on their island. After the talk there will be a performance by the song and dance ensemble of the National Independence detachment just arrived from Hokkaido. . . ."

When the applause subsided, the loud-speakers instructed the first and fourth cultural brigades of the Youth League to meet at once by the well on the south end of Old Village.

Irie jumped up, clapped his hands and commanded: "Fourth Brigade, this way!"

3

Irie's cultural brigade divided up into several small groups. Sumiko and Matsuko with their picture theatre, forming a separate team, were to go and give a performance at the settlement beyond Hunchback Hill.

Before leaving they went to the brigade headquarters in Komao's house in Old Village to collect some leaflets. In front of the garden gate they found one of the defenders on guard with a stick while a crowd of youngsters pressed against the fence trying to obtain a glimpse of what was going on inside. Diagonally across the street was the village council building, which with its high windows, pine-bark roof and flagstaff, looked like a school.

In the middle of the yard a group was busy drawing something on a large sheet of paper pasted on a frame. The finished placards and streamers were stacked on the floor of the open verandah. One placard was still on the drying board, leaning against the supports of the verandah roof; it was a charcoal drawing of a long face with a wide nose and a thin, drooping moustache. At the moment it was being admired by Tsumoto, who was squatting in front of it with a paint-smeared jacket over his shoulders, and Komao, in nothing but shorts. His chest and back were covered with daubs of green and red paint, but the large purple smudge under one eye had not come out of a paintbox.

"Now, that's what I call a good job," Tsumoto was saying. "It's Yugeh to the life. We've got to put it on the production line." And turning to the group in the middle of the yard, he shouted: "Hey there! You can begin duplicating this one!"

A cyclist stopped at the garden fence; he had a scarf around his neck. "We pasted up all we had," the newcomer was saying. "Now we'd like to go down to the railway bridge—will you have some more ready for us soon?"

"You can have some right away if you want," Tsumoto replied, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. "Katsu Gengo's gone on the production line—three lines as a matter of fact, as you can see over there. Now we'll put Yugeh into the works."

Komao brought out several batches of leaflets from the house and gave them to the cyclist. He handed one batch to Matsuko.

When he heard that Matsuko and Sumiko were going to Kumoi, Tsumoto was indignant. Didn't Irie know that it was dangerous there? Why, the lads who had gone there to post up the bulletins had barely escaped being manhandled by some fascist rowdies. Komao had been hit with a stone flung from a sling; it was a good thing our fellows had been on bicycles.

"We chose the place ourselves because it's near," Matsuko said.

Tsumoto snorted.

"They all have the same surname there and consider themselves the descendants of some deity or other," he said.

"Isotakerunokami I think they call themselves," Komao added. "There's a shrine for that deity of theirs on Sado Island. I don't know what the god was like, but I can tell you his descendants are a rum lot." He felt the discoloured swelling under his eye.

"Can you run fast?" Tsumoto asked. "That might come in handier than karate. A lot of the local chaps have joined the security corps and have been whipping up fascist sentiment. Those ruffians are liable to get nasty."

"Is it true some of our people were arrested at the soya factory?" Sumiko asked.

"The fascists attacked them but they managed to get away." Tsumoto touched Sumiko's shoulder with his finger. "Please be careful. If anything happens, don't be ashamed to run. Understand?"

Sumiko smiled, wrinkling her nose.

"I'll go without my coat. I can run quite fast if I'm lightly dressed."

4

They took the train to Kumoi which was situated on the western slope of Hunchback Hill, not far from the railway line. Beyond the huddle of houses one could see the squares and triangles of the cultivated plots laid out in terraces on the hillside. Huge billboards alternated with pines on both sides of the track; the largest billboard, showing turtles drinking *saké* out of cups, bore the legend: "Keston tablets are good for the liver and prevent that morning-after feeling—drinking need not shorten your years!"

From the station the girls set out on foot along a narrow country road bordered by lime trees. On the way they passed a pinewood through which they could see a tall wooden gate painted red and garlanded with straw rope. "That's probably the shrine of the deity they are descended from," Matsuko remarked.

A notice was nailed to a post at the entrance to the village:

WARNING

Reds, keep out! We'll manage our own affairs without your help. If you come, you'll be kicked out.

Pure Heart Fraternity.

The girls exchanged glances. Matsuko brushed off the dust from her trousers and hitched up the box strapped to her back. Sumiko straightened her kimono and made fast the straw straps of her sandals.

They walked up the village street to a house with freshly made barrels drying on the reed roof, and a clay-walled store-room next to it. Putting the box down in the shade of a peach tree, the girls sat down. Matsuko pulled out her mouth organ and began to play, while Sumiko shouted:

"Come one, come all! The show is here! A play to delight young and old. Come one, come all!"

The younger generation responded at once. Children came dashing up from all sides, followed by women carrying their infants. They gathered in a semi-circle in front of the box on which Sumiko had placed the frame with the first picture.

Matsuko stopped playing and Sumiko took over. She spoke slowly, in a singsong voice:

"Now this is Bukiti, a gay young man who was thrown out of his job at the factory and is now tramping the roads in search of work. Spring is far advanced, cherry-blossom time has gone, but the peaches are in bloom as they are in your village too."

Matsuko behind her was whistling and making clucking noises with her tongue.

"The birds are singing in the bamboo grove, and Bukiti too breaks into song: So-ora dokkoi, dokkoi na! So-ora dokkoi, dokkoi na! And the sky overhead is clear and blue, the lovely sky of Japan. . . ."

Matsuko made a buzzing sound.

"But suddenly foreign aeroplanes appear. All day long they fly and at night they don't let you sleep. And now here comes. . . ."

Matsuko was now imitating a motor horn.

" . . . the motor-car of Donta, the money-grubber, to whom all the forests in these mountains belong. He's on his way to his estate—you can see the gates, handsome like the gates of a shrine, over there beyond the river. He's simply starving, the poor man, and in a short while he'll be gorging himself with grilled eel and all sorts of European delicacies, and drinking *saké* with that foreign medicine that's supposed to give one long life. . . ."

"What's going on here?" came a gruff voice from the background.

Three young men wearing their shirts over their trousers pushed up to the front. One of the three was lame and carried a stick very much like a police club.

"Fascists!" Matsuko whispered to Sumiko. "Grab the pictures and run!"

Seeing the rowdies, the audience of women and children fell back and gathered in a knot.

"Looks like Reds," the lame man said to the fellow next to him who



began rolling up his sleeves, exposing the tattooed figure of a nude woman on his forearm. A row of fountain pens stuck out of his shirt pocket.

"You'd better clear out," he said with a glance at the picture in the frame.

"Run!" Matsuko whispered again, jabbing Sumiko in the back.

The third of the newcomers, a scoundrelly-looking fellow with a square, pimply face kicked over the box with the pictures. Matsuko leapt to her feet.

"We are not doing anything wrong," she bristled, "You needn't get rough."

Sumiko quickly picked up the pictures, tucked them into the bosom of her kimono and stepped beside Matsuko. The man with the tattooed arm looked her over from head to foot and whispered something to the man with the limp.

The latter signed with his stick toward Matsuko and said:

"Get her out of the way."

"Leave her to me," the man with the tattooed arm said and stepped toward Matsuko.

He had to pay at once for his incautious movement. In a flash Matsuko had knocked his feet from under him and he fell heavily. Evading a blow aimed at her by the pimply rowdy, she caught him in the chest with her elbow. In the meantime the first man had got to his feet and was about to hit Matsuko from behind, but Sumiko leapt at him and clung to his arm. The man pushed her aside and the next moment she had been caught by the belt and lifted up into the air; then she fell, pulling her assailant down with her.

"Stop that! Stop it at once!" somebody cried in a croaking voice. "It's an outrage!"

"Shame on you, fighting young girls!" said a woman standing among the children.

An elderly man in a straw hat and canvas jacket parted Matsuko and the pimply young man who were rolling on the ground and signed to the man with the tattooed arm to let Sumiko go. Sumiko quickly straightened her kimono and bent down to collect the pictures which were scattered on the grass. Matsuko picked up her mouth-organ and tucked it under her sash.

"But these people are Reds. Look at the badges they are wearing," the pimply young man said, wiping the blood off his nose. "They came here to make trouble."

"Red or green, I don't care which," the elderly man snapped back. "You'd better get going," he added, turning to Sumiko.

The tattooed ruffian came up to Sumiko and snatched the pictures which were protruding from the bosom of her kimono. He handed them to the man with the limp. Several other men gathered around.

"Didn't I tell you to go?" the elderly man repeated to the girls in a stern voice.

"We want our pictures back," insisted Sumiko.

The fascists tore them up. The elderly man made an impatient gesture with his hand.

"Quick, get going!"

Sumiko reached into her bag for a handful of leaflets and threw them into the air. As they scattered and floated down, the children rushed to pick them up.

The man with the limp shouted a foul word and swung at her with his stick.

"Easy there!" the old man turned on him. "And you two, the faster you get away the better!"

"Let's go, Sumiko," Matsuko said, pressing her hand against her mouth.

"If you bitches show up again we'll twist your legs off," the rowdies shouted after the girls as they went.

Sumiko was going to turn to face them again, but Matsuko pulled her by the sleeve. Abusive remarks and coarse laughter followed them down the street. Dogs were barking behind garden fences, and heads were thrust out from the windows. Someone threw a stone at them, but it struck a tree; another stone just missed Matsuko's head. The girls kept closer to the fences. Holding herself erect, Matsuko strode along with her head up, swinging her arms bravely, and Sumiko followed her example.

When the houses disappeared from sight behind the trees, Matsuko

ko's brisk gait changed to a limp and she sank down on a stone by the roadside.

"They knocked out my tooth," she rubbed her cheek. "And another one's loose."

She spat and began rubbing her ankle.

"Mata-chan was wonderful," Sumiko said. "For your foot-work and elbow-work you deserve a full hundred points."

"And you muffed it," the other retorted. "You should have warded him off with your right instead of napping."

Sumiko looked guilty. She passed her hand over her hair.

"I told you to run," Matsuko went on. "Why didn't you? Now we've lost all the pictures—"

"That's all right," Sumiko said. "I made three spare sets for each of our plays, just in case."

Matsuko rose and looked in the direction of the settlement. Then she put her finger in her mouth and made a face.

"Next time we'll come at night," Sumiko whispered to her. "And we'll plaster up the whole place with leaflets and posters. Let them complain to that deity of theirs."

"Uh-huh," replied Matsuko, her finger still in her mouth, and nodded.

5

Irie did not let the girls go to Kumoi a second time. A miners' choir from Taira was sent instead. This time the fascist rowdies did not dare to try break up the concert and meeting which was held at the same spot where Matsuko and Sumiko had tried to give their performance. After the meeting, the miners marched right through the village singing—and very impressive singing it was too, since the whole choir consisted of bass voices.

Matsuko and Sumiko went to the settlement at the dam and the villages of Inase and Kuga, where they gave their show without any untoward incidents. They drew big audiences of adults as well as children, and after the show the village youth group treated them to some delicious cakes.

It was very late when they left Kuga and they decided to spend the night at the camp set up by the village defenders and action groups in the glade before the shrine. The girls found themselves a place under an old elm and made themselves a snug little shelter by draping their straw capes over the branches. Before retiring for the night Matsuko went over to the camp-fires where the men were gathered and listened for a while to their talk.

"The soya bean factory group have returned," she said when she came back.

"Ryu-chan too?" Sumiko whispered. "I am so worried—"

Matsuko slapped her on the hand.

"Stop that, Sumiko. You ought to see what you've done to your neck—it's black and blue. Of course he must have come back too."

The night was a quiet one, with only one alert, and that did not last long. In the morning Matsuko went down to the river to wash her kimono while Sumiko set out to look up Ineko.

In front of one of the tents of the field hospital Sumiko saw Mariko talking to Nakaya and a young man in student uniform and a white hospi-

tal cap. Near them a man wearing dark glasses was sitting hunched over on a folding stool. As Sumiko ran over to the group the man looked up and she recognized him. It was Takami. She bowed to him, very much surprised to see him there. Mariko took Sumiko aside and told her about her trip with two big cultural brigades to the neighbouring districts. Their old karate instructress had come along and when some rowdies in one village had tried to break up a puppet performance they had found her more than a match. Just now Mariko was engaged in collecting donations in town.

"How is Freddy?" Sumiko asked.

Mariko said she had seen him a few days ago. He had told her some engineers had arrived from America to build something or other at the base. He was going to find out what.

"Did he find out about—why Yashuji and the others died?"

"He said he expected to know before long. He'd made friends with a CIC lieutenant and would try to get the story out of him."

Nakaya beckoned Sumiko over and led the way to the tent.

"I'd like to take a look at your shoulder," she said. "Does it bother you now?"

"I haven't had time to think about it—you don't know how busy we've been."

Nevertheless she followed the doctor into a tent with mattresses spread on the floor and a glass instrument case and several stools in a corner. Nakaya seemed satisfied with the results of the examination and said Sumiko was getting on very well; a transfusion of blood could be made again after a while, and following that there was a method of treatment that could be tried to get rid of the keloid.

"Some more injections?"

"No, a Russian method. Grafting tissue. It is used to treat lupus, tubercular ulcers and the like."

"Tell me, Nakaya-san, will I ever be able to have children?" Sumiko asked, the blood rushing to her face.

"Of course you will." Nakaya's eye wandered to the badge pinned on Sumiko's kimono lying on a stool. "And Sumiko-san must fight for the happiness of her future children."

Nakaya went out of the tent. As she dressed, Sumiko listened to the voices of Takami and the student talking in front.

"The number of rats he's destroyed so far is fantastic," the student was saying.

"In other words treatment with radio-activity can be done internally too. Is that what you mean?" Takami asked.

"Yes, by introducing radio-active isotopes of phosphorus, cobalt and iodine, for instance. Endogenous radiation, it's called. Our professor, however, is studying the effect of radio-activity on the blood-building system by using X-rays. He is mainly interested in the effect of such exposure on the protoplasm and cell nuclei of the blood-forming organs and the blood in the peripheral vascular system. He's written an article on the degeneration of monocytes."

"Can exposure to such radiation artificially induce anaemia and degeneration of the marrow?"

"It all depends on the duration and intensity of the radiation. In general it can be said that prolonged or frequent exposure causes the number of erythrocytes and the haemoglobin to decrease."

"They say that there's an institute in Richmond in the United States where they're studying the effect of gamma-rays on animals," Takami said.

"Yes. Powerful X-ray installations are used for the purpose. I've heard they've done a lot of experimenting with anthropoid apes—all in secret, of course, because, all this radio-activity research is being done for war purposes."

"So you say your Professor Hayashi is killing rats with X-rays," Takami smiled bitterly. "Just like the Amis radiated the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the Picadon. The ABCC Institute has probably collected plenty of data in Hiroshima for radiation warfare."

"I was told the Amis wanted us to turn the *Fukuryu maru* fishermen over to them, but our doctors said they'd treat the men themselves. Besides they officially asked the Amis to release all the information they have about the ash collected at Bikini. We need it to plan the treatment properly. But the Amis refused."

Sumiko heard no more, for Takami and the student went over to the tents opposite the canteen huts where some children were playing police and patriots. The youngsters wearing paper hats were the police; swinging their fists they attacked other children squatting on the ground. The latter fought back and, leaping up with lusty yells, dashed in pursuit of the retreating "police." The penalty for being caught was to get down on all fours and bark like dogs. As soon as they saw Takami, the children interrupted their game and ran to him.

Takami stopped Sumiko as she came out of the medical tent and pointed to a sign hanging from a tree: "Kindergarten for the children of the defenders of Peace Line. Field brigade of the Democratic Teachers' Union."

"So you see they found work for me too," Takami smiled. "I'm the nurse."

"The children are fond of you," Sumiko said in a serious tone. "It's important work and we all ought to be grateful to you for it."

She bowed to him and went over to Yasaku's hut. Just then several cyclists appeared on the road from behind the hill on which the Yugeh estate stood; one of them—he had a rucksack on his back—jumped off his cycle and, turning to look toward Sumiko, lifted something to his eyes, a pair of binoculars evidently. Then he put his hands to his ears in imitation of a fox.

Sumiko pressed her hands to her breast and sank down on the grass with a deep sigh. Ryukichi waved to her again, and then he disappeared behind Monkey Forest.

Sumiko heard her name called. She turned and saw Ineko and Yasaku pushing an empty hand-cart painted a bright red. They were on their way to the Old Village. A lorry-load of newspapers and magazines had arrived and some important visitors from Tokyo were expected—the deputy chief of the secretariat of the Cabinet and deputy Yugeh.

"They want to induce the peasants to submit to the government's decision," said Yasaku. "They've ordered the village council to meet. The Elder was summoned to town yesterday by the chief of police, who told him that three battalions of security troops armed with machine-guns had arrived. After that the Elder's wife went from house to house with bags of sweets trying to persuade the women to get their husbands to 'see reason.'"

"She went to Otoyé-san's place too," said Ineko, "She promised to get Otoyé-san invited again to the Sakuma and Yugeh houses to tell fortunes and said that Sakuma had found her a job at a health resort hotel and would pay her in advance, so Otoyé-san will switch over to their side most likely. . . ."

"We'll have to show up these enemy machinations in our next bulletin," said Yasaku.

"I see you got your hand-cart," Sumiko remarked with a laugh. "It's a very handsome one too. Heiske had to give in after all. . . ."

Yasaku tossed his head. "He's afraid of me. Everyone's afraid of me. Our bulletin goes all over Japan. When I expose someone he's exposed to the whole country."

6

They reached the village in time to see two shiny black limousines speeding through the outskirts of Eastern Village in the direction of the town. The guests had departed.

There was a crowd in front of the council building. A detail of village defenders had been posted at the entrance to keep people out. The council was in session. Knots of women had gathered under the windows on either side of the entrance chattering excitedly.

On an oak tree opposite the council building hung a large streamer with the inscription: "Hold the Peace Line! Ami bootlickers, get out!" All the bamboo and wattle fences were plastered with posters depicting a woman in flashy European clothes arm-in-arm with an American officer. The woman had a long face, a wide nose and a thin drooping moustache. "Panpan statesman, clear out!" read the inscription.

Several women managed to push their way past the guards to the top of the steps. One of them, Kuhei's wife, leaned over the balustrade and shouted down to the crowd.

"Trying to win us over with bright promises, the swine! If the base is enlarged, they say, all sorts of shops, restaurants and bars will be opened. That's what they call prosperity. To hell with such prosperity!"

"Prosperity for the Sakumas and Yugehs and nobody else," one of the guards put in. "They'll get full value for their land, you can be sure of that."

"The place will be swarming with Amis," cried another woman. "They'll pull off our clothes, examine us and stick 'checked' signs on our doors!"

Little Otoyé, her hair flying loose, mounted the steps. Standing on tiptoe, she raised her arms, passed her right hand before her closed eyes and began to speak in a strange moaning voice: "I see . . . I see before mine eyes . . . I see you all staggering drunkenly about, with your hair curled up and your faces painted . . . I see you embraced by foreign soldiers . . . and I see your children at your feet . . . infants with yellow hair and green eyes . . . and your men far away digging, digging . . . building barracks."

Kuhei's wife shook her head and set up a loud wailing; the other women wept loudly and beat their breasts.

"Good for Otoyé," observed Yasaku, clucking his tongue admiringly. "I must write a verse about her."

Leaving Ineko to look after the hand-cart, he pushed through the crowd to the steps. The guards admitted him into the building.

"Yasaku says the whole world knows about our Peace Line," said Ineko. "It's in the papers and on the radio and Yasaku's poems have most likely been translated into Russian and Chinese. The other night I dreamt Yasaku and I went to the World Youth Festival together. . . ."

"Matsuko and I are going to the settlers' village tomorrow," Sumiko confided. "It's five hours' walk from here. They say there are fascist hooligans there too. I'd better go and look for Matsuko."

She found Komao's yard full of people with knapsacks, bundles and bags—newly-arrived reinforcements for the Peace Line. In one corner of the yard a group of young men stripped naked were sluicing themselves with cold water amid boisterous laughter. Kanji and Ryukichi came out of the back door carrying knapsacks. Tsumoto and Iketani appeared. Kanji stopped in front of Sumiko and examined her critically.

"Hallo, cry-baby," he said. "Haven't seen you for a long time. You have grown."

"Have you been to your uncle's?" Ryukichi asked her, looking sternly.

"No, he will be angry if he knows I am here. Let him think I'm still in town."

"She's right," said Kanji. "As soon as we get through with this business we'll decide what to do with Sumi-chan. The chief thing is to get the American doctors off her trail."

"We ought to publish the whole story of the brass tag and the mysterious summons to the professor," said Tsumoto. "Then the Americans might lay off her."

"Sumiko-san must join our singing and dancing ensemble," said Iketani. "We're rehearsing a dance for the May Day concert. It's a fisherman's dance called 'The Turtle Walk,' something like this . . ." he spread his palms over his chest and began swaying his hips and stamping his feet. "Sumiko-san is just the person. . . ."

Tsumoto cut him short angrily: "You want to turn the child's head with all your dances and theatre shows. Sumiko must learn a trade so that she can go to work when she gets well."

"Hear, hear!" said Kanji and patted Sumiko on the back. He limped over to his bicycle, which was propped up against a tree, and wheeled it out of the yard. Iketani went with him.

The other cyclists followed with their knapsacks and bags. Ryukichi stepped aside with Sumiko.

"Ryu-chan is going away again?" asked Sumiko in a mournful voice. "Are you going far?"

"Yes."

"Will you be gone long?"

"No, I'll be back soon."

"Can't I go with you?"

"No."

"Is it dangerous?"

Ryukichi showed her his palm. "See that life line?" he said. "I'll live to be a hundred and thirty."

Sumiko bit her lip, gave him a long look and bowed. Ryukichi smiled, nodded and hurried out after the others. Sumiko stood looking after them for a while and then walked slowly toward the kitchen.

"What are you hanging about here for?" said a stern voice. It was Tsumoto. "Run at once to Irie," he said. "Tell everyone to hurry over to

the forward line. The police are getting ready to attack. This time it looks serious."

"Why did Kan-chan and Ryukichi go away?"

"They've gone for reinforcements."

"Is it dangerous?"

Tsumoto looked at her quickly and smiled.

"It's dangerous here too. This isn't a picnic, you know."

Shouting and hand-clapping sounded from the street. Sumiko ran over to the fence. Someone had climbed on to the roof of the council building and hoisted on the flagmast a large mat with a red flag sewn to it.

A string of lorries and bicycles flying flags and streamers appeared at the other end of the street. Another action unit had arrived. Sugino and Heiske came out on to the porch and Sugino shouted to the people in the lorries: "Thanks for coming! Go straight over to the right flank. We're all going at once to the forward line!"

7

For three days the third Youth League action group commanded by Iketani had held the road near the soya factory settlement. On the night of the third day the group after a brief rest was transferred to the right flank where it took up a position in the third row behind the fishermen and workers from the chemical fertilizer factory.

It was raining, a fine warm drizzle. Bundles of straw and bast mats were passed down the rows. Sumiko and Matsuko sat under a cape, munching biscuits.

The enemy shot several flares into the sky. One of them floated down on the right flank and in its greenish light Sumiko saw Matao in the next row with a scarf on his head. He went over to Iketani and, speaking in a deliberately loud voice, he said:

"Four girls from the post office were sent to hospital today. We mustn't let the girls sit in front. I have put our girls in the back behind the ropes."

Iketani laughed and spread his hands: "I have five girls, but I can't do anything with them. They refuse to budge."

"They've got to obey orders," snapped Matao. "This is a battlefield, not a merry-go-round. I'm going to speak to Sugino about it."

"You go and boss your own unit," muttered Matsuko.

"Sugino-san won't agree with you," piped up Sumiko, sitting beside a young man in overalls. "Because he's got brains."

Irie tittered. Matao bent down and, seeing Sumiko under the rain cape, muttered something and threw a paper bag with some dried fish in it at her feet.

Sumiko thanked him.

At that moment a searchlight was switched on from the other side. The beam slid over the front ranks on the right flank. Curt commands echoed. There was the noise of engines starting up and the slamming of doors.

"They're coming!" shouted Iketani, shielding his eyes from the blinding glare.

Out of the darkness shadowy figures swinging clubs descended on the first rows of sitters, and almost immediately the night was filled with the sound of muffled cries, shouts and groans and the crackle of splintering

wood. Matsuko sprang to her feet and swung her arm, but fell on her knees at once. A young man in front of Sumiko stretched out on his back, his arms gripping the legs of a policeman. A police club descended on Sumiko's knees, and a violent jolt sent her sprawling on her side. She covered her eyes against the blinding light for a moment, then looked up to see Matao near by struggling with a policeman who had him by the collar. Matsuko rushed at the policeman and hung on with both hands to the belt that ran diagonally across his chest. Sumiko grabbed his legs and they all crashed to the ground. Matsuko tore off the policeman's helmet and struck him a glancing blow with the edge of her hand. Matao tackled another policeman. The sitters at the back began to sing. "Then raise the scarlet standard high. . . . Beneath its shade we live and die," they sang to the shrill accompaniment of conch shells. A shot rang out, then another, and several more. The fishermen in front closed in, brandishing their oars and boat-hooks. The searchlight was blotted out and police whistles sounded in the darkness. The enemy were retiring.

Matao and two other fishermen picked up the policeman and dragged him over to the bushes.

"My leg," he groaned, "oh my leg."

Matsuko, seated on the ground tidying her hair, panted: "Those belts of theirs are very handy. You can hang on to them and work with knees and feet. . . ."

Sumiko wiped her bleeding face with her hand. Matsuko dabbed Sumiko's cheek with her scarf.

"That's from the iron studs they wear on their boots. You have to keep your face covered."

Irie passed by. He walked to the end of the row and turned back. "No losses," he reported to Iketani. "They fired into the air."

But several people in the two front rows had been badly injured by clubs. They were helped off the field by the girl medical students.

Matao handed Sumiko the policeman's helmet.

"Here," he said, "Put this on when they attack. I have another one."

Sumiko wiped the helmet thoroughly inside and out with straw. The rain stopped. Iketani and the lad in the overalls busied themselves mending the broken banners. The lull lasted no more than an hour. Then the searchlight was switched on again and the attack was resumed—this time against the left flank. Shots rang out again. Police lorries and two jeeps with Americans in steel helmets moved toward the line.

"Willow and Maple to the left flank!" came over the loud-speakers. "Make haste!"

The searchlight beam lit up the rapid movement of banners and streamers in the back rows. Shots crackled. Iketani sprang up.

"The Amis are shooting. Look out!"

The jeeps were hidden behind a lorry. A row of policemen stood in front of the lorry.

"They're retreating!" someone shouted.

The searchlight moved over the central sector and the right flank and went out. For a while there was complete darkness. Then torches were lighted at the back, and two men were seen making their way between the rows.

"Hey, who's that in the third row?" boomed the broad-shouldered man in a cap who was in the lead. "Are you Plum?"

Irie flashed his pocket torch in the direction of the voice. Sugino blinked and raised a bandaged hand to his face, while the lad at his back shook a police club at Irie.

"No, Cypress," replied Irie. "What's this? Are you hurt?" he said to Sugino.

Sugino squatted on his heels.

"It's just a scratch."

"Plum was sent over to Tsumoto earlier in the day to cover East Village," said Matao. "Didn't Heiske tell you? Your chief of staff is all tied up in knots."

"He told me they sent Violet to Tsumoto?"

"Violet? Who's that? The tram depot?" asked Iketani.

"No, the porters from the river wharves," Sugino replied.

"How are things on the left flank?" Irie asked.

"They got as far as the seventh row," answered Sugino, shaking his head. "That was a nasty business. They turned their searchlight on the sector and when they saw a lot of women there they struck. We had Peach there before, and two reserve groups, but they all had to go back to town to work. And there were no replacements at the moment." Sugino pushed back his cap and scratched his head. "I thought of shifting Plum from here."

"Let me go," Matao proposed. "I told you we oughtn't to let the women up front. Let them sit at the back if they want to."

Sugino glanced over to where Sumiko and Matsuko were sitting and nodded.

"Yes, the women will have to be moved back. There will be another attack soon."

"Well, you'd better order them yourself," said Iketani. "Perhaps they'll obey the commander-in-chief."

Matsuko settled herself more comfortably with her legs crossed under her. Sumiko put on her helmet and drew up her knees.

"I have a suggestion to make," said Irie raising his hand. "In order to maintain the prestige of the command I move we use force."

Sugino laughed and made a gesture of resignation.

"Let them stay. The girls on the left flank behaved splendidly."

"They fired some shots in the air over here," said Iketani, "trying to frighten us."

"There was some shooting on the left flank too, but not in the air," said Sugino. He took out a cigarette and lit it. "Two people were wounded."

"It was the Amis who fired," said Iketani, pointing to the jeeps behind the lorries. "I saw them."

"We ought to go out and get those bastards with the guns!" Matao burst out in fury. "We'd have proof then."

"We mustn't do anything rash," said Sugino calmly. "We were prepared for this. Let them shoot. All the worse for them."

"We'll sit it out to the end," said the lad in the overalls.

"That's the spirit," said Sugino. He got up. "Hold on till morning. We'll send replacements as soon as we can. Kanji sent word that he's coming with three units of workers from Osaka, and Ryukichi has already left Kobe with a group of dockers. Reinforcements are coming." He turned to Matao. "Take your unit over to the front line."

He drummed his fingers on Sumiko's helmet as he passed.

"Wait! I almost forgot!" Iketani called after him. "Have they sent down the accordion for our ensemble?"

"Yes, and guitars too," Sugino replied.

After they had gone, Matao went off with his unit to the left flank. Iketani's group moved down into the second row. Irie gave Sumiko and Matsuko bamboo sticks to defend themselves with.

It was the hour of daybreak and a hush had settled over both sides of the front line. The first cocks crowed in the distance. Iketani allowed his group to snatch a little sleep. New units arrived on the left flank and took up positions in the front rows.

"They'll have to be going off to work soon," said Matsuko, indicating the workers from the chemical fertilizer factory sitting in front.

Sumiko stretched herself, straightened her helmet, leaned her head on Matsuko's shoulder and closed her eyes.

Suddenly the sirens of the police cars set up a deafening din. Commands were shouted and whistles blew.

"They're coming!" yelled Iketani and got up, pulling his cap down over his forehead.

The line of police advanced on the right flank this time. Two armoured cars and a jeep with a yellow stripe on its bonnet moved behind them. The sitters in the first row sprang up to defend themselves with their sticks. Pieces of a splintered flagstick flew past Sumiko's head. A policeman leapt at her, seized hold of her stick, and began raining blows on her helmet. She struggled, her face pressed against her assailant's tunic which smelt strongly of sweat and leather. His belt scratched her cheek. Through a haze she saw another policeman clubbing Matsuko, saw her shield her head with her arms and then sidestep swiftly and push him in the face; the policeman staggered back, and Iketani leapt on him.

Lying flat on her stomach, Sumiko heard shots fired near by, then the shooting receded, and a long whistle sounded. A young man with a bandaged head jumped over Sumiko, followed by another: help had arrived and the police pulled back.

Sumiko sat up, gathered her legs under her and bent her head. Blood dripped on to the straw. She groped for her scarf, but could not find it. The whistling and shouts sounded very far away; there was a buzzing in her ears and her head swam. She threw her head back. High up in the sky floated clouds of a curious colour. Then the clouds were blotted out by Matsuko's face which had a long scratch on one cheek.

"Sumi-chan must go to the hospital." Matsuko's voice too sounded muffled and blurred.

Someone passed a damp cloth over her face and began bandaging her head.

"Breathe deeply," a woman's voice whispered in her ear.

After a while she opened her eyes. The dizziness had gone, but now she was conscious of a dull ache in her temples. A young nurse in a dark-grey kimono with a first-aid satchel over her shoulder was sitting beside her.

"Do you think you can stand up?" she asked.

Sumiko nodded. The girl helped her to her feet. Sumiko turned her head and saw Matsuko, Irie and some others standing silently around a figure stretched out on a piece of matting. The lad in the overalls sat down on the ground, leaned against a flagstaff and bent his head. Irie and

Matsuko too seated themselves on the ground. Matsuko laid her hands on her breast and bowed her head.

"Lean on me," said the little nurse, but she burst into tears and began swaying on her feet. So Sumiko put her arm around the girl's waist and walked with her slowly between the rows.

8

Sumiko sent the weeping nurse back to the front line and went the rest of the way to the dressing-station herself. The injured were sitting or lying under the trees where they were given first-aid; the tents were reserved for the serious casualties.

Sumiko's wound turned out to be a light one. A fresh bandage was put on, and the bruises and scratches on her neck and shoulder were painted with iodine. While her wounds were being dressed, Sumiko saw Takami in a white coat stained with blood and dirt come out of a tent at the far end. A red hand-cart stood outside the tent.

"Does anything else hurt you?" asked the student who was doctoring the injured. "Let's have a look."

Sumiko felt her hip and grimaced with pain. "I'd better see Nakaya-san," she said.

Takami, who had gone back into the end tent, looked out again and beckoned to Sumiko. She went inside. The wounded lay on mattresses covered with white oil-cloth. Nakaya was giving a hypodermic injection to a man whose face was swathed in bandages. He stifled a groan. On a mattress in a corner beside a small instrument cupboard lay a shape completely covered by a sheet. Heiske and Ineko were sitting next to it. Heiske's head was bowed and he was weeping silently, pressing his fists to his eyes. Ineko sat motionless, staring fixedly at a long lock of hair which had escaped from under the sheet.

Another casualty was brought in on a stretcher. Takami bent down and whispered in Sumiko's ear: "Nakaya-san will examine you in a moment."

One of the patients ground his teeth and groaned. Ineko stared before her, biting at her sleeve. Sumiko laid her hands on her breast and bowed her head.

"Are you hurt too?" Nakaya inquired in a weary voice, stroking Sumiko's head.

"It's nothing. . . ." She covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. Takami helped her to rise and they went out of the tent.

"Poor Yasaku," said Takami. "He was killed by a bullet. He died on the way here."

He lit a cigarette with shaking hands.

"Two women were clubbed to death. Tsumoto was wounded in the neck."

The hoarse voice of the loud-speaker sounded through the trees: "All those who are in a condition to carry on will return at once to the lines! We shall fight till victory is won. Reinforcements are pouring in. . . ."

Sumiko got up.

"Rest a few minutes more," said Takami. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the dirt off Sumiko's trousers. "I left the kiddies in the care of the old women for today. I'll soon be relieved here and then I shall go over there too. . . ."

"To the front line?"

She looked up at him incredulous. He lowered his eyes.

"You are surprised. . . . But I have given much thought to all this and I have made my choice. I realize that the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are dying not because they bear the brand of the Picadon, but because they are not given proper medical treatment, and many of them because of poverty. The government does not allocate sufficient funds for curing bomb victims and combatting the effects of radiation. The nation's money is spent for other purposes, preparations for more wars, more Picadons. The people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are dying not so much of radiation fever as of war fever. And it is the Amis who are whipping up that fever, by building Enolas all over the world. I shall take my place on the Peace Line with those who want to put an end to all wars. . . ."

"Well said, Takami-san," Sumiko bowed to him, then turned and bowed toward the end tent and set off down the road, limping painfully. A defence group passed her, carrying broken streamers and tattered mat banners. As she passed Yasaku's news-stand she saw bundles of papers and booklets still tied with string, lying on the boxes in front of the hut.

At the bend in the road she sat down under a pine tree to tie her sandal straps. A group of people with red arm-bands came up from the hollow, carrying broken streamers. In front walked Mariko, in a leather jacket and blue trousers, and a man with a camera slung over his shoulder.

Mariko ran over to Sumiko and threw her arms around her.

"You're hurt? Is it a bad wound?" she asked anxiously.

"No, just a scratch."

Mariko took off her glasses, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes and said shakily: "Iketani was killed. Shot in the head. It was the Amis. Irie saw them shoot."

Mariko's companions had also stopped. The man with the camera called Mariko over and pointed to his watch. She wiped her eyes and put on her glasses.

"We were called in from town the night before last," she explained.

"We have been on the left flank ever since. Now we're going for a little rest, but we're coming back."

"Tsumoto-san was also wounded. . . ."

"Yes, his unit got into a fight near Kurotani. Sugino was hurt too . . . a gang of fascists attacked him near the school last night and he was stabbed in the arm."

"Kan-chan and . . . and the others ought to be here instead of travelling about," said Sumiko.

"They are doing important work, and dangerous work too. They may be caught at any moment. Irie's eldest brother was arrested in Niigata and beaten up so badly that he's spitting blood." Mariko got up. "We'll probably be sent to the right flank when we return, so I'll see you there."

Mariko and her companions went down to the canteen, and Sumiko continued on her way. As she was limping along, the little eight-year-old daughter of the invalid Kihati came up carrying an earthen jar and a bottle of water. Glancing at Sumiko's bandaged head, the little girl frowned importantly and said: "I'm going too. My big brother's there."

On the other side of the hollow a village defence squad was making its way to the Line. Sumiko saw the leader turn and motion impatiently

to the others, who obediently quickened their pace. At the end of the Line an elderly defender plodded along leaning on a long stick, an umbrella hat hanging at his back. He looked like a pilgrim. Sumiko saw him stop to wipe his head with the scarf on his neck. Sumiko stopped and peered over at the man.

"It's Sumi-chan's uncle," said the little girl. "He sat next to my brother yesterday."

"Uncle! Uncle!" cried Sumiko, cupping her hand to her mouth.

But he did not hear her, the wind was blowing the other way. Lifting his hat on to his head, he set off and soon disappeared behind the purple azalea bushes.

There were no more attacks. Besides their frontal assault on the Peace Line, the police had attempted that night to break through the Line from the rear—at the glass factory and the foot of Monastery Hill. Assisted by groups of hooligans, they had made a desperate attempt to smash all resistance by striking a blow from three directions simultaneously. But the defenders of the Line had stood their ground.

The shots fired on the Peace Line, like the volley on Palace Square on May 1, 1952, reverberated throughout the land.

All the progressive papers reprinted the obituary notices from the bulletin *Carry On the Fight*.

Besides Yasaku and Iketani, the death roll included four more defenders—two women from the glass factory, a worker from the cement factory and a charcoal burner from Tunnel Hill.

Yasaku was buried at the cemetery near New Village, the charcoal burner in the graveyard outside Kuga Village. The bodies of Iketani and the others were taken to town and their funeral turned into a huge demonstration of workers and students.

Reinforcements continued to flock to the Peace Line from all over the country—groups of workers and students who succeeded in getting past the police cordon patrolling railways and roads. Money, medicines and other supplies, even toys for the children of the sitters were sent from all parts of Japan and an endless stream of telegrams and letters of greeting and support poured in.

9

A radar tower with several tall steel masts alongside it appeared at Enola Base.

The progressive newspapers announced that a documentary film entitled "The Peace Line" and produced on funds collected by the Democratic Youth League was to be released shortly. It showed how the police had attacked the Line, how they had been beaten back and how American officers in a jeep under cover of lorries had fired at the unarmed defenders. The film had been shot with a camera equipped with a telescopic lens. The producer, director, cameraman and script-writer was Katsu Gengo.

The police attacks were not repeated. They had caused too great a commotion in the country without achieving any results. The Line was now some thirty rows in depth, and the area between the Yugeh estate and Monkey Forest was held by mobile reserve units ready to fill in any breach that might occur. Nothing short of machine-guns and tanks could dislodge the sitters, and so far no orders had been received on that score.

The Committee of Action warned everyone not to relax vigilance; the enemy was obviously biding his time and might strike at any moment.

But now a new menace threatened. For several days there had been heavy rainfalls in many parts of Japan. This fact in itself was in no way remarkable—similar rainfalls had occurred all over the world since the beginning of time. But this time the Tokyo papers raised the alarm. They reported that Geiger counter tests of the precipitation made by meteorological stations and university laboratories had shown the rain to be radio-active.

Radio-active rain! The whole country buzzed with the sensational news. Another calamity had befallen Japan, this time in the shape of rain clouds!

Enterprising firms soon had anti-radiation waterproofs on the market. A perfumed colourless liquid called "Antiradin" in attractive bottles appeared on sale; it was guaranteed to wash off all trace of radon, mesothorium, radiothorium and any other radio-active substance.

The enemy was quick to take advantage of this scare. A group of rowdies from the Pure Heart Fraternity drove a soya factory lorry through New Village at top speed and scattered leaflets which stated that the rain clouds that had darkened the sky over Japan came from the direction of the Marshall Islands where the Americans had conducted another hydrogen bomb test a few days before. To sit day and night on the wet ground under a downpour of radio-active rain was suicidal. The sitters must disperse at once. Their stupid obstinacy would not only earn them a prison sentence but pernicious anaemia as well.

In response to the fascist leaflets a commission of physicians from the Kondo clinic, headed by Professor Hayashi, issued a declaration addressed to the defenders of the Peace Line.

"Comrades! Do not let yourselves be intimidated! There are no grounds for panic. Our commission has made a careful investigation of the rain-water in this area and have found that it is not dangerous to health. Beware not of the rain but of enemy provocations.

"It is true that radio-active rain has fallen in some parts of the country, due to the tests made the other day on the Bikini atoll which resulted in the pollution of the upper strata of the atmosphere.

"But this fact can only strengthen our determination to carry on the fight for peace, freedom and independence, and for the prohibition of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. Accursed be the warmongers who befoul the skies and the soil of Japan! Long live the Peace Line!"

The rains stopped. Cuckoos called to one another on Chestnut Hill heralding the coming of summer and the approach of the rice-planting season. To help the peasants with the field work the students' domestic aid brigades had been strengthened by girls from the action groups.

Matsuko and her team had been working all morning on the rice fields on the hillside near the mulberry grove, repairing the bamboo water pipes. Promptly at noon a relief came—a mixed group of girls from Kuga and

a fishing village in the next county. Matsuko and her girls trooped off to the canteen where each was given a bowl of steaming noodles and grated radish. At a brand-new tent, which flew the flag of the association of small and middle manufacturers and merchants, they received small wooden jars of bean jam as a special treat. Two barbers in white smocks worked under a tree near the tent under a large sign which said: "Peace Line Defenders served free of charge. Branch of the Fuji Hotel Barber Shop."

There was a queue at the news-stand—fresh newspapers and magazines had just arrived. Kormao, now in charge, unpacked and sorted out the newspapers and magazines.

With their fresh copies of *New Woman* magazine and the Committee of Action bulletin under their arms, Matsuko and Sumiko hurried back to the front line. The bulletin reported the arrival of action groups of metal workers and electricians from Osaka and dockers from Kobe.

"Kanji and Ryukichi must be back too by now," said Matsuko.

"Look!" Sumiko pulled her friend by the sleeve. A new group of defenders had appeared: in the last row on the right flank sat several young monks in brown robes. Across their shoulders they wore broad white bands bearing the holy word "Nanmyo-horen-gekyo" and beside it "We Oppose Rearmament!" They were eating bread and jam with great zest. Women and children were sitting next to the monks.

The third action squad of the Youth League—Irie was in command now—occupied places in the central sector of the first row just behind the ropes. On the left flank at the reservoir were students carrying green flags and young men in white caps and white shirts with red badges on their chests. Sumiko scanned the rows in search of the New Village squad, but she could not find them—they must have been relieved. She saw Ineko under a large streamer between the left flank and central section. She was sitting cross-legged with her hands on her knees as still as a statue. The white armband of a defender gleamed on her sleeve.

"Hurrah, they've taken down the towers!" cried Matsuko clapping her hands.

Sumiko turned and looked over toward the base. The radar tower and the radio masts were no longer visible. The police wore caps instead of helmets and there were no more American jeeps behind the police lorries. The trench mortars behind the trees had disappeared as well. Only the green tents near the round rock remained.

Irie hurried up from the right flank.

"Where have you been all this time?" he demanded of Sumiko. "I've been hunting for you everywhere. This letter was brought by messenger."

He handed her a small envelope marked "private and confidential." She tore it open and took out the slip of paper inside. "This is urgent. Please come at once, not later than five o'clock. Auntie is down with typhoid fever."

Irie leaned over and whispered in her ear: "It's from Mariko. I think she has had some important news. Tsumoto was arrested yesterday, the office of the Youth League was searched and now they're looking for Kanji and Ryukichi. They want to pin treason charges on all of us."

"Where are Kanji and Ryukichi?"

Irie glanced at his watch. "It's half past one now," he said, ignoring her question. "Run over to the school and get on the lorry there. You'll make it by five."

DAWN ON THE MOUNTAINS

1

Sumiko got off the lorry at the mat shop. The clock on the corner pointed to twenty minutes to five. She ran up the street to Mariko's house.

She found Mariko and the two maids packing small cloth parcels—gifts for the Peace Line from school children—into large paper sacks.

Mariko quickly explained the reason for the urgent summons. Freddy had telephoned early that morning to say that he had some very important news but he was unable to come to Mariko's house and he asked her to meet him in town. Mariko, however, could not leave the house at the moment; she was expecting a phone call from Tokyo, besides which she had an appointment at Kumada's photo studio where a brigade of students was working on some Katsu Gengo photo posters. As luck would have it, the comrade who had maintained contact with Freddy in Mariko's absence was out of town and since it was thought inadvisable to send a new person whom Freddy had never seen before, it was decided that Sumiko should go.

Freddy would be outside the office of Mariko's father at half past five. When she got there, Sumiko after making sure that she was not being followed, should pull out her handkerchief and wipe her chin. Then she must go into the bookshop next door to the office and examine the books on the shelves. Freddy would come and stand beside her. As soon as he had communicated his news, Sumiko must hurry straight home, but if she had the slightest suspicion that she was being followed, she must do everything she could to shake off her pursuers.

Mariko looked at Sumiko's trousers and shook her head dubiously. They were the black ones she had given her some weeks ago. But now besides having faded in the sun, they were a mass of varicoloured patches.

"Not exactly the appropriate wear for conspiratorial purposes," remarked Mariko. "Those trousers tell the whole story of the Peace Line."

Sumiko put on her old trousers which were less flamboyantly patched. Mariko gave her a silk scarf to wear, and a wrist-watch.

"Where was Tsumoto arrested?" Sumiko asked.

"At the Red Cross hospital. We hadn't time to move him to a safer place."

"So they want to throw them all in jail?"

"They're looking for Dr. Konishi from the Kondo clinic, Kan-chan, Ryu-chan and Iwai, the secretary of the posts and telegraph union. They want to round them all up and frame them on some trumped-up charge."

"Suppose they arrest everybody?" Sumiko whispered.

"That is something we have always been prepared for," Mariko glanced over at Yukio's portrait. "If they go, others will take their place and the fight will continue."

"But Kan-chan and Ryukichi won't be caught, will they?"

"Not if they have had time to take cover. But Sumi-chan must be going. Now look in your pockets and see you have no documents about you, nothing the police could identify you by. Just in case. . . ."

Sumiko patted her trouser pockets. "No, I only have my handkerchief and some money."

Mariko, her brows contracted, gave Sumiko a final inspection.

"If you see you are being followed, try to give them the slip. As soon as the Tokyo call comes through I'll rush off to the photo studio. You can meet me there after you've seen Freddy."

Sumiko boarded a tram at the Niagara Dance Hall. As she felt in her pocket for some change her fingers touched something hard and flat. She pulled it out partly and saw the corner of a brown leather-bound booklet. It was her ABCC pass! It had lain there in her pocket all this time, completely forgotten. She thrust it back and glanced furtively about her. A flashily dressed man with a natty moustache was staring at her through narrowed eyes. He winked. That wink reassured her. Sleuths don't wink. She reddened, frowned and turned away.

2

She saw Freddy on the other side of the street. She took out her handkerchief and rubbed her chin. Freddy crossed the road. He was in civilian clothes and carried a pair of yellow gloves. He followed her into the bookshop and sauntered over to the corner where she stood studying the books on the shelves. Two students were standing at the magazine counter in the middle of the shop, one of them was copying something out of a magazine. There were no other customers. Freddy took a book off the shelf and began to speak in a hurried whisper:

"You look over to the right and I'll keep my eyes left. Don't turn to me, pretend to be reading. I have very important news. The Command has decided not to extend the territory of the base after all. They didn't expect to encounter such opposition. The rocket range will be built elsewhere. They're negotiating for a small island off the Noto Peninsula. The Peace Line won. I drank a whole bottle of champagne last night to celebrate. . . ."

Sumiko dropped a little book in a brocade cover. Freddy bent down quickly and picked it up.

"I know how you feel. I want to throw books around too and dance with joy," he whispered as he handed it back to her. "I can hardly hold myself back. But the fight isn't over yet. Listen carefully. Before making any official announcement about Enola, the Command wants to make one last attempt to overcome opposition. They're planning a final operation. The Japanese police have already been given instructions. An hour after midnight tomorrow night—now see you get this straight—that is one a. m. of the day after tomorrow, a detail of plain-clothes policemen will mine the road near the New Village cemetery. Three empty lorries will be driven from the base in the direction of Turtle Hill and will be blown up. The drivers are Negroes and Puerto Ricans so they don't count, and the lorries are old Studebakers due for the scrap heap. If everything works out as planned, the Japanese police will lay the blame on the Reds, charge them with sabotage and claim that the blowing up of the lorries was to be the signal for an armed uprising in the area of the base. This will give them the excuse to send a security corps with tanks against the Peace Line. The corps will be supported by American troops on a 'mutual security' basis. The Peace Line will be smashed and the question of extending Enola will be settled. That's the plan. One a.m., day after tomorrow at the cemetery. Have you got it? You mustn't let those swine get away with it!"

Sumiko her eyes glued to the book said: "I'll remember. Thanks. Did you find out about that other business?"

"What business?"

"About those other comrades who were taken to the Amis for questioning and never came back."

"No, the CIC officer I expected to get the information from has gone to Saigon. He'll be back in about ten days. Why didn't Mariko come?"

"She was busy."

"Please tell her to warn the Anti-War Association for the Defence of the Rights of Man that their office is going to be searched tomorrow morning. Can you let her know at once? Is she home?"

"No, she will be at a certain place soon."

"At the House?"

"No. She's going to the Kumada photo studio."

"The one next to the Kondo clinic? She told me last time they were preparing an exhibition of photographs about the Peace Line."

"Yes, they're making posters just now . . . Katsu Gengo . . ."

"Is he there now?" Freddy glanced quickly at his watch. "He's foolish to take such risks. Here's something else for Mariko. I'm afraid the Amis have begun to suspect my connection with you people. At any rate I've noticed that my things have been searched a couple of times in my absence. Ask her to talk to someone and let me know next time we meet where to go if I find out they're going to nab me. I'll be court-martialled for sure if they find out about me. So I must know beforehand where to hide."

"I'll tell her. You must take care of yourself."

He dropped a book. It fell at Sumiko's feet. As they stooped simultaneously to pick it up, Freddy glanced over his shoulder and whispered:

"Take care of yourself too. They'll be rounding up all the Reds in revenge for the Peace Line. If I'm caught . . . you'll think of me sometimes, won't you? Remember, I have done all I could for Japan. . . ." He wiped his eyes hastily. "Now, have you got it all? Tomorrow night at one hour after midnight. We've got to stop their dirty schemes. Good-bye. Take care of yourself."

He moved away and pretended to be looking for a book on the next shelf. Then he went over to the counter, bought a magazine and strolled out of the shop, whistling. Sumiko looked at her watch. It was four minutes to six.

3

She was being followed. She had suspected it for some time, and now she was sure. She stopped at a sports shop and examined a pair of boxing gloves displayed in the window. A heavy-jawed man in a panama hat and a light grey mackintosh stopped beside a lamppost and lighted a cigarette. She went on, quickening her pace until she was almost running and pulled up suddenly at the window of a souvenir shop. The man also stopped at the edge of the pavement. He pulled out his watch and wound it.

She dare not go home. She walked to the corner and ran across the street. The sleuth crossed the street and caught up with her. She stood for a while outside a jeweller's shop, then mingled with a crowd outside a cinema. The sleuth went up to a shoeblack. Sumiko worked her way back through the crowd, keeping under cover as much as she could, then turned and

boarded a tram that was just moving off. Pushing her way to the front, she glanced back. There was no sign of the sleuth. She got off at the next stop and turned into a side street. The Kondo clinic occupied a one-storey building next door to the Rendezvous Cafe. There was one entrance for both the clinic and the Kumada Studio. Beside the door hung a poster with the inscription: "Help the Peace Line! Donations of money and clothing accepted here." As she reached for the door-handle a cab pulled up at the kerb and a head in a panama hat looked out of the window. Her heart stopped.

"Just a minute, I want to speak to you. . . ." He got out of the cab and came over, pulled a soiled visiting card from his pocket, twirled it in his fingers and put it back again. "I very nearly lost you . . . you are a fast mover." He smiled.

"Why are you going to the doctor? Are you sick?"

"I . . . er, my aunt is sick."

"Oh, so you are quite well? Don't be scared. . . . I merely wanted to offer you a good job. Splendid conditions. . . ."

"A job?"

"Yes. Very solid firm . . . on East Street, opposite the American quarter. The Florida. You will get a salary and tips, and money in advance for clothes and cosmetics. Can you dance the sanba and other modern dances?"

Sumiko scowled at him. "No, I can't. But I have learned the karate." She opened the door.

"I'll wait for you," he said, and pulled out his wallet. "Here, take some money. Ask them to give you a thorough examination while they're at it and issue you a medical certificate."

She poked her tongue at him and went inside. The door of the Kumada Studio was locked. She knocked and, receiving no answer, she went over to the clinic. The pale, hunchbacked girl at the desk told her that Kumada had gone out a short time before with some students. They had finished their work. Sumiko went over to the window and moved the blind aside to a crack. The man in the panama hat was walking up and down on the other side of the street. He had dismissed the cab.

"Is Nakaya-san here?" Sumiko inquired.

"Nakaya-san has been at the Peace Line for days," said the girl with a note of pride in her voice. "She'll stay there until they win."

"I hadn't seen her for the past few days, I thought she had come back to town. . . ."

"Oh, have you been there too?" the girl got up and bowed to Sumiko. "I wanted to go so much, but they made me stay here."

Sumiko asked for permission to use the telephone and dialled Mariko's number.

"It's me," she said when Mariko answered. "No, I'm at the clinic. Some man attached himself to me, I thought it was one of those, you know whom, but it's someone else. Also a swine, though. What's that? Yes, I saw my aunt. Yes. It's typhoid fever, but a wonderful typhoid, simply marvellous. . . . I'll come over right away and tell you about it."

She hung up and went over to the window. The man in the panama hat called over a newsboy, bought a paper and settled himself against a lamp-post to read. A tall American woman wearing a white coat walked past with a small white fluffy dog on a leash.

Two covered lorries slid noiselessly up to the entrance and policemen poured out. Sumiko sprang away from the window.

"The police!"

They burst into the hallway and began drumming with their clubs on the door of the photo studio. One of them, an officer, kicked open the door of the clinic and strode in, followed by several others.

"This is a hospital!" cried the little registry clerk. "You can't come here! . . ."

The officer gave her a punch in the jaw and she dropped back on her stool. Sumiko rushed at the officer and kicked him, but the next moment she was seized from behind.

"Handcuffs!" shouted the officer rubbing his knee.

They handcuffed her and dragged her out of the building and pushed her into a jeep. Two policemen got in with her, holding her by the elbows. The car sounded its horn and moved slowly down the street, cutting through the crowd attracted by the commotion.

4

She was taken down a corridor on the second floor of police headquarters and thrust into a tiny cubbyhole no bigger than a wall cupboard. The door slammed, leaving her in complete darkness. At first she heard steps and voices in the corridor, then the swishing sound of a broom sweeping the floor. Then all was silent. Presently a clock somewhere near by chimed eight.

She longed to pinch her neck but her hands were bound. Tomorrow night! Now they would keep her here or hand her over to the Americans. They weren't likely to release her, not for a long time at any rate. And she would not be able to warn Mariko, or anybody else. Tomorrow night the road would be mined and a few hours later there would be an explosion. And then the horror would begin. The enemy would make the most of the explosion; the cause of the Peace Line would be lost and Enola would triumph. That would mean that Yasaku, Iketani and the others have died in vain. Everything would be lost. Tomorrow night. One, two, three, four, five . . . twenty-nine hours from now. And she could not warn anybody. She was helpless. She kicked the door with all her might. She banged her head against the wall. She bit her lip until it bled. Tears rained down her cheeks. Tomorrow night. . . .

Only twenty-nine hours left. No, less by now. The clock had just struck nine. Time passed swiftly. But here in this dark cupboard the minutes dragged. Twenty-eight hours left. Only twenty-eight. She had no way of warning anybody. She could do nothing, she was quite alone. Prayers, incantations, charms—nothing would help now. Marishiten Monjubosatsu, Inari-daimyoin, Namuamidabutsu. . . . Amen . . . MSA . . . CIC . . . ABCC. . . .

ABCC! That was it! ABCC!

She began to bang furiously on the door and walls of her cell with her feet and her handcuffed hands, shouting at the top of her voice.

"Let me out! Open the door!"

She shouted herself hoarse in a few minutes. Someone came running up and knocked savagely at the door.

"Stop that noise, you there! Are you crazy!"

"Open the door at once!"

The door opened a crack and the policeman swung his arm at her.

"I'll beat the nonsense out of you!"

"Call the chief! At once! You had no right to arrest me."

"Shut your row, or I'll beat you to a pulp, you little. . . ."

Sumiko stamped her foot.

"Call your chief at once! I'm an employee of the ABCC. I have my pass with me. You have no right to keep me here!"

A police officer wearing gold-rimmed spectacles came over.

"Let me out of here at once!" Sumiko cried. "I work in the ABCC. I have my pass here in my pocket. If you don't let me go, I shall complain to the American commander-in-chief."

The officer told the policeman to search her. The policeman led her out of the cubbyhole and felt in her sash.

"Not there, you fool!" she screamed. "It's in my pocket."

The policeman pulled out the pass and handed it to the officer. The latter examined it and glanced at Sumiko over the top of his spectacles. He shook his head, clucked his tongue and handed it back to her.

Sumiko stamped her foot. "How can I take it with my hands like this!"

The officer signed to the policeman who pulled out a bunch of keys out of his back pocket and unlocked the cuffs. Sumiko rubbed her numb wrists.

"Come this way please," said the officer. "I'm afraid there has been a misunderstanding." He hissed politely and shook his head.

She followed him into a room in which three other police officers sat at tables piled high with papers. The officer in the spectacles waved her to a leather arm-chair under a large map of the city. She sat down and tidied her hair.

"I'll just telephone to the chief," said the officer in the spectacles. "Wait a few moments, please."

She glanced at her watch. It was eighteen minutes past nine. The crystal was broken.

"Be quick, please. I am in a hurry."

The officer put in a telephone call, but, receiving no answer, went out of the room together with the policeman. Sumiko kept her eyes on the clock on the wall. The officer came back in exactly six minutes.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. We phoned to the headquarters of the base and gave the number of your pass and they told us to call the medical division. We did so but nobody answered. The chief told us to drive you over to the headquarters. You were detained by mistake," the officer rubbed his hands and bowed. "Those responsible will be punished."

"I don't want to go to headquarters just now," Sumiko said, frowning. "I have other business at the moment."

An elderly officer with close-clipped moustache and deep pouches under his eyes came in. The officers sprang to attention as he entered.

"I am exceedingly sorry this happened," the elderly officer said with a smile. "I have telephoned over there again. The officer on duty in the medical division said you were to go over there. They want to ascertain all the circumstances. I have apologized to the officer on duty and I hope you too will forgive the misunderstanding. You were taken for a Red. There is a car waiting outside."

Sumiko went out escorted by the chief and the officer in the spectacles. The chief saw her to the entrance. The officer got into the car with her and they drove to the American quarter.

5

The MP at the gate glanced at her pass and said "Okay" out of the side of his mouth.

He said something to a soldier who jerked his chin in Sumiko's direction to indicate that she was to follow him. Sumiko turned to the Japanese police officer and also jerked her chin:

"You'd better go back, they won't let you in here."

As she hurried after the lanky American, she glanced at her watch. It was twenty minutes to ten.

She showed her pass to the Negro MP on duty at the door of the Medical Division. The soldier opened a door next to the coat-stand and she found herself in a small office.

A young Nisei was sitting at the desk with his legs draped over the arm of the chair. His hair glistened with hair oil, and with a pocket mirror in one hand and a tiny brush in the other, he was engaged in brushing his eyebrows. The soldier said something to him and went out.

"Come over here, girlie," said the Nisei, still gazing into the mirror and speaking Japanese with an American accent. "So you're XZ-98? Well, well!"

"Yes," answered Sumiko.

"What the hell happened over there? Let's hear your side of it."

"I dropped into the clinic and all of a sudden the police raided the place and before I knew it they had handcuffed me. They mistook me for a Red. They found my pass and brought me here. Now I have to go home, I haven't had anything to eat all day. But I'll come tomorrow for sure."

The Nisei picked up a pair of tweezers and proceeded to pluck his eyebrows. When next he spoke it was without any trace of an accent:

"The officer who phoned me from police headquarters said you beat up two policemen and kicked up a fearful row over there. You made an awful fuss and kept shouting that you were someone of importance, so they got the wind up. I didn't bother to tell that idiot of a Japanese policeman that you are nothing but a little fraud. I wanted to have a look at you first myself. Suppose you explain your somewhat unusual behaviour?"

Sumiko dropped her eyes modestly and said in a low voice:

"I didn't make a fuss at all, and I didn't try to scare anybody. They're telling lies. I only said I had an ABCC pass and that I was being treated by the American doctors. So they all apologized right away and called you up." She bowed. "I am sorry if I have given you any trouble. May I go home now? I will come here tomorrow morning."

The Nisei put down his mirror and tweezers and looked at her. He lifted one eyebrow and surveyed her with an appraising eye.

"Hm," he said. "Not so bad. Streetwalker?"

"No."

"Not yet, you mean. Well, what do you do for a living?"

"I'm looking for work, I'm unemployed. Please let me go home? I'm in a hurry...."

"Listen, girlie," he said, looking her straight in the eye. "I don't believe a nice girl like you ought to be unemployed. I go off duty at midnight. Meet me at 12.15 at the Yakumo-Ryoka Hotel on Station Square. We'll take a private room. Will you come?"

Sumiko flushed and lowered her eyes.

"Yes, if you let me go now. . . ."

"If you don't come I'll go straight to the chief and tell him that you tried to masquerade as a big shot, and frightened the guts out of the police. Then I'll call up the police headquarters and tell them you lied about working for us. You'll be arrested and tried as an impostor. So you had better do what I say. Now you can go."

"Thanks."

Sumiko bowed and walked to the door. He followed her out and nodded to the Negro on guard who let her through without examining her pass.

"I'll be seeing you," said the Nisei. "Only you'd better change your clothes or they won't let you into the hotel."

Sumiko bowed to him once more and went out of the building. As soon as the door closed behind her she jumped for joy and flung up her arms like a bird about to take flight. She glanced at her watch, it was seven minutes to ten. Good, there was still time. Banzai! She was free. Now for home. What luck!

She set off at a run.

"Hey, just a minute!" shouted a voice behind her. "Stop!"

She turned and saw the Nisei in the doorway. He called her over.

"Come inside for a minute," he said, holding the door open.

The Negro guard let her pass and the Nisei led her back to his office and closed the door.

"I forgot to ask you what you were doing at the clinic. You're not sick are you?"

"I . . . I had a stomach ache."

"A stomach ache?" He narrowed his eyes. "That's a lie. You've probably caught something. Now go straight to Professor Renshaw's office, you're registered there. His assistant Cherigan is on duty right now. Tell him I said he was to examine you."

Sumiko pressed her palms together before her face and bowed.

"I am perfectly well, my stomach doesn't ache any more. And I have to hurry home . . . I must get dressed."

"I'm not letting you out of here before you've seen the doctor. I don't intend to get sick. He won't keep you long. Now run along. You know where to find him."

"I've forgotten the way. . . ."

"All right I'll take you there."

He led the way to the narrow corridor which began from the room with the white cupboards. This time there was no armed guard at the door. Sumiko pointed to the door with the brown leather padding at the far end of the corridor.

"Is that it?"

"No. It's the last door on the right, Room No. 8." He lifted up a warning finger. "You'd better keep away from the brown door if you don't want to be. . . ." He ran his finger across his throat and clicked his tongue. Then he winked at her, turned on his heel and went out.

When his footsteps had died down, Sumiko knocked at the door of Room No. 8. There was no answer. She turned the knob carefully and pushed the door open a crack. The light was burning but the room was empty. A telephone rang in the next room and she heard a voice behind the brown leather door and dived into Room No. 8 as several people hurried down the little corridor.

After a while she opened the door into the corridor and listened. A curious sound as of something heavy being dragged over the floor issued from behind the brown leather door. Then the door slammed, and presently another, inner door closed and she heard footsteps receding.

Sumiko went out into the corridor. The brown door was slightly ajar. The corridor was deserted. She tiptoed over to the door. At that moment someone inside coughed and she drew back. The telephone rang again. A voice behind the brown door answered it and she heard hurried footsteps. The footsteps receded and she heard the sound of an inner door being closed. A few minutes later the door was re-opened and someone came back into the room and the swishing sound of something soft and heavy being dragged across the floor was repeated.

Sumiko tiptoed up to the brown door and peeped in. She saw a wide empty corridor. There was a light behind the frosted glass door on the left-hand side which had the letter Z painted on it. Suddenly the light went out and the rough frosted glass turned blue. A little red light went on over the door and a shadow appeared on the glass. Sumiko sprang away from the crack. She heard shuffling steps in the wide corridor and then all was quiet.

Sumiko put her eye against the crack in the door again. The frosted glass door was slightly ajar and a faint buzzing noise issued from within.

She pushed the brown door a little and it opened noiselessly. At the same moment the buzzing ceased and for a while the only sound Sumiko heard was the thumping of her heart. Then the buzzing was resumed. She slipped silently into the wide corridor and over to the frosted glass door. Just then she heard someone coming up the narrow corridor behind her.

She sprang back but as she reached for the handle of the brown door, someone opened it from the other side and Sumiko collided with a man on the threshold. The man stepped back. He wore brown boots with thick soles and khaki trousers, and carried an army cap in his hand. She looked up and froze. Before her stood Freddy. He too stopped dead and his widely set eyes blinked rapidly. Sumiko placed a finger to her lips, stepped quickly into the narrow corridor and closed the brown door behind her.

"What are you doing here?" Freddy asked in a hoarse whisper with a frightened glance over his shoulder.

He saw her stick a hand into her pocket and he snatched a small revolver out of his back pocket. Sumiko produced her pass, opened it and showed it to Freddy. He glanced at it without lowering his gun. She held her finger over the first two letters of the ABCC stamp in the corner.

"CC. Expiration date indefinite . . ." he muttered in bewilderment. "You've been in there?" he stammered, pointing a thumb toward the brown door.

Sumiko pocketed her pass and put her finger to her lips. He emitted a low whistle of astonishment and put his gun back into his back pocket.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said, shaking his head and chuckling. "This is a surprise. . . ."

"Hush!" she nodded toward the brown door. "They are busy in there. . . . Hear the buzzing?"

Freddy slapped her on the back.

"So you're from the CC—C-Commando. Special agent, eh?" He gave a snort of laughter. "And I thought you were a real Red. Well, well."

He slapped her shoulder again. She stiffened.

"What's the matter? Oh, I see." He pulled a small black booklet from the upper pocket of his jacket and flicked it with his finger. "CIC" he said shortly.

Sumiko leaned weakly against the door jamb and her hand clutched convulsively at her belt.

"You . . . you're from the CIC," she stammered hoarsely.

He stood at attention and saluted.

"Yes, ma'am. We're colleagues, it appears, although we work along slightly different lines. I'm counter-intelligence and the C-Commando belongs to the Central Intelligence." He pushed his cap on to the back of his head and laughed soundlessly. "What a lark! I never thought your outfit also had a line on the Japanese Reds."

Sumiko opened the door of Room No. 8 and looked inside. It was still empty.

"Professor Renshaw is gone," she said. "I don't see Cherigan either. Too bad, I had to see him."

"So you have business with them too?" Freddy whistled again. "Then you know what Renshaw is doing?"

Sumiko nodded.

"What do you do for them?" Freddy asked.

Sumiko shook her head. Freddy laughed.

"You needn't be afraid to tell me," he said. "Think only you special agents know about it? Well you're mistaken. Do you help him with the rats?"

"You'll tell on me, and. . . ."

Freddy took her by the belt and pulled her towards him.

"You're right to be cautious, of course. But you needn't think I know nothing about Renshaw. Why, only last night I was called in to help index the rats and question them." He leaned over and whispered in her ear. "Do you know where they're from?"

Sumiko frowned and nodded: "Do you?"

"Sure, I know everything. When the armistice was signed the Japanese army command was handed lists of the prisoners we held. Some names were crossed out as having died. But they weren't dead. They were being kept in Somen Camp in Pusan. Later on we transferred them secretly to Okinawa."

"Do you know about that too?" Sumiko feigned astonishment. "About Okinawa. . . ."

"And now they're being buzz-buzz-buzzed," Freddy said, pointing to the brown door.

Sumiko turned and listened. "Too bad the professor isn't here. I don't think I'll wait for him after all. I am in a hurry."

"Did you pass on the story I gave you in the bookshop about the mining of the road?"

"No, I haven't seen Mariko yet. I went to the studio but she wasn't there."

"Yes, damn it, they were late again, the idiots!" Freddy stamped his foot. "As soon as you told me about Katsu being there I reported to headquarters and they phoned over to Japanese police but by the time they got to the studio Katsu was gone."

"Katsu?" Sumiko opened her eyes wide.

"Yes, Katsu Gengo. He seems to be a big Communist, one of their Party leaders, judging by everything. He writes, draws, makes films. There isn't anything he can't do, it seems. It would be a big blow for the Japanese Communists if we could lay our hands on him."

"You want to catch him?" Sumiko asked.

"Yes, we have orders from Tokyo to get him dead or alive. And we'll get him in the end." He glanced at his watch. "You'd better go and tell Mariko about the mining of the road. You haven't forgotten? Tomorrow night."

"But is it true?"

"Yes."

Sumiko looked at him in surprise.

"Then why are you warning them?"

"Why?" Freddy smiled and shook a finger under her nose. "Now that would be telling tales out of school."

"I'm not going to Mariko today, I have other things to do." Sumiko pursed her lips. "If it's true I'm not going to let the Reds know, not without the chief's permission."

"Don't worry, we'll let your chief know. You just run along and tell Mariko. We'll pass on the information along another channel, but you'll get it to them faster. Hurry."

Sumiko began walking away, then stopped and shook her head.

"I'm not going. You want to pass on some information to the Reds and then get me into trouble."

He came over to her and hissed: "They must be told at once. They're bound to take steps to stop the lorries from being blown up. And they'll walk right into our trap. Our men will be waiting for them there tomorrow night to nab them. We can make a big case out of this and their goose will be cooked. Actually the mines will be laid tonight. Our men have gone there already."

"But if the road is mined today they'll go off today."

"No, they won't. They're delayed action mines. They won't go off for forty-eight hours."

"And what about the base? Is it true the Amis . . . I mean the American command has decided not to enlarge it. Shall I tell Mariko that too?"

"Unfortunately that's the truth. If this scheme doesn't work out, we'll have to give up the idea of expanding Enola."

"Then you do give the Reds authentic information. You warned Mariko several times about police raids. . . ."

"Well, you have to give reliable scraps of information occasionally. Otherwise you won't win their confidence. You ought to know that. That makes it easier to get them to believe any nonsense you may have to tell them when the need arises. See?" He chuckled her under the chin. "And now, little one, suppose you buzz off to Mariko. She's at home waiting for you by now."

Sumiko brushed his hand away.

"Look," she said. "There's a nasty little beast on duty in the office tonight. He wants me to meet him tonight at the Yakumo-Ryoka. I don't want him to see me. He'll start bothering me again and he gives me the shivers."

"You mean Urusigaki, that stinker," Freddy muttered through his teeth. "Come on, I'll see you out. He won't dare come near you if he sees you with me. He knows I have his number, but I'm saving it for some other occasion. I have him where I want him."

They went down the narrow corridor.

"You promised Mariko to let her know about those other prisoners who died."

"Oh, I can't tell her anything about that. And you'd better keep your mouth shut on that score," he added, nodding toward the brown leather door.

The door of the Nisei's office was open. As they went by he rose to his feet.

"Well," he said, "Have you seen the doctor?"

"He's busy at the moment. He told me to come tomorrow," Sumiko replied hastily and turned to Freddy who took her arm and scowled over his shoulder at the other Nisei.

"You keep out of this. She has no time for you. She has important business to attend to. Get it?"

He hurried her to the exit. She started to pull out her pass but the MP at the door saluted and stood aside.

As she was going out she turned and whispered to Freddy: "I forgot to tell you. I heard they're going to hold a secret meeting tonight. A very important one."

"Where?"

"In the Florida Restaurant. After midnight. Katsu Gengo will be there."

She bowed and passed through the door.

This time she walked slowly away from the building. She did not jump or wave her arms. Not until she had gone some twenty yards did she turn her head cautiously and look back. There was no one in sight, no one had come out after her, everything was quiet. She started to run.

7

Mariko sat listening, her face pale, her eyes wide with horror, her hands pressed to her head. Now and again she cried out and beat her head with her fists.

There was not a moment to lose. She sent her maid for a taxi, took her desk calendar which was covered with notes and made some rapid calculations. Then she dialled a number and in a gay voice began to talk about the baseball match between the women's Red Socks and Blue Bird teams, discussing the score and the number of hits. Sumiko noticed that the person at the other end seemed much interested in the batting average in each of the nine innings because Mariko had to repeat the figures several times.

"Sumi-chan will come with me," said Mariko when she hung up.

The taxi was waiting for them at the gates. They drove in the direction of the railway station, turned off to the river embankment and sped past the warehouses and fish stalls and after winding among crooked alleys

for some time stopped at a corner. Mariko spoke only once throughout the whole journey:

"But he sounded so sincere. He wept. Who could have thought. . . ."

"Men, it seems, are better actors than women," said Sumiko.

They got out of the cab and walked down a narrow street that smelt of fish, crossed the long paved yard of a Christian church and emerged in a side street which sloped up a hill past a row of small houses whence issued the twanging of a samisen, to a wooden house bearing the sign "Massage, Acupuncture. Moxibustion." Here Mariko turned on to a path which led past back fences to a thatch-roofed hut surrounded by a half-ruined wall. Mariko knocked several times on the shutter and when she heard an answering knock from within, went around to the back of the house and opened the gate into a tiny yard. A man stood by the gate. Mariko whispered to him and led Sumiko over to a small shed near the wall. Sumiko sat down in the corner of the shed behind some sacks of coal. Mariko went out.

Sumiko stretched out on an empty sack. She felt very hungry. In the silence she heard a cicada chirping somewhere near by. From the distance came the whistling and puffing of locomotives and now and again the rumble of cannon from the direction of the sea. She raised her wrist-watch close to her eyes, but it was too dark to see the time.

Someone in the street outside the wall coughed and voices approached.

"Yesterday only five people were hired to carry posters," she heard a man's husky voice saying. "They closed the window after that although there were nearly seventy others waiting in line."

"They're still standing," said another voice. "Outside the labour exchange and the Tachumi building contractors' office as well."

"Yesterday my wife was lucky. She was passing by the house of that doctor near the public baths and saw the notice. She went straight in. There was only a small line. And she sold a glass of blood."

"What is her group?"

"AB."

"There's not much demand for AB. But they say that doctor is a smart one, he can pass it for group A."

They laughed and moved on. After a while Mariko came. She said that everything was all right. Immediate action was being taken. The Anti-War League for the Defence of the Rights of Man had been warned. By morning leaflets and posters exposing the provocation would appear, and the story would be sent to Tokyo in time for the morning papers. The duplicator personnel had been notified—Katsu Gengo was already on the job. They had got in touch with the Peace Line and, beginning with midnight tomorrow, defenders would patrol the roads and warn all drivers that the road had been mined by the CIC and the Japanese police. After that a special pamphlet would be published about Professor Renshaw who came from an institute of radiology in Richmond and had done research on the Korean front before coming to Japan. A campaign for the release of Tsumoto, Irie's eldest brother, and others was to be launched. In a word, everything was being done to frustrate the enemy's plans. Reports from Tokyo had confirmed Freddy's information that the Americans had abandoned the scheme to expand Enola.

"That means victory?" said Sumiko.

"Yes, we have won a victory here, but now the Amis are planning to build a rocket range on an island off the Noto Peninsula or on Sado

Island. And so the fight will begin over there. All the action groups will be dispatched there. Final victory is still a long way off. . . . I have been severely reprimanded for Freddy. And I deserve it."

"Why?"

"Because I was such a fool as to trust him."

"What about Ryu-chan, and Kan-chan and the others?"

"They ought to be safely underground, that is if they weren't caught during the round-up last night."

"I suppose that CC is some very important secret organization."

"Yes, it is one of the agencies of the American intelligence service. Its Tokyo branch works in conjunction with the Counter Intelligence Corps."

Mariko took Sumiko's hand. "Now listen. It has been decided to expose Freddy. The Amis will of course guess the part Sumi-chan has played. And so the comrades have decided that Sumi-chan must go into hiding at once. You will have to stay away for some time. When you come back you must get well and then we shall find some work for you."

"Do you think I'll be able to work? After all, I was a fool too. I also believed Freddy."

"You will learn. And now you must go away at once. Every minute is precious. Police searches are going on all over town. Whole districts are being cordoned off. We shall let Sumi-chan's uncle know that she is safe."

Mariko took off her glasses and gave Sumiko a warm hug.

"We'll meet again some time. Grandad and the other comrades send Sumi-chan their greetings."

They went outside. Two young men were waiting for them.

"Look over your pockets, Sumi-chan," said Mariko. "In case you're caught."

Sumiko slapped her trouser pockets.

"Nothing there. . . ."

Mariko handed her a little parcel of food and a small thermos flask. Sumiko at the last minute felt inside her pockets and pulled out her American pass. She shook her head guiltily.

"I nearly forgot it."

Mariko frowned. "Now that's very careless of you. Very," she said sternly. "Give it to me."

Sumiko was about to unstrap the wrist watch but Mariko stopped her.

"No, keep it," she said with a smile. "It brought you good luck."

They started out. One of the young men walked ahead of Sumiko, the other behind. They went down to the workers' settlement near the marshalling yards, passed a row of shacks made of old crates and came out on the alley behind the warehouses. Then more dark alleys and they were on the street with the fish stalls. They followed it to the end and turned off into bushes on the river's edge where a boat was moored. Sumiko lay down at the bottom of the boat and the men covered her with matting and bunches of seaweed. One of the young men—he had a scar on his cheek—sat at the prow, the other took the stern oar and they pushed off.

After a while the rocking of the boat increased and Sumiko knew they had reached the bay. She sat up, untied the parcel and ate some dumplings fried in bean oil and drank some warm tea from the thermos. Then she covered herself up with the matting again, put some of the seaweed

under her head for a pillow and dozed off, lulled to sleep by the measured creaking of the oars.

When they woke her they had already reached the shore and the sky was growing pale. A flock of sea-gulls circled over a rock jutting out of the water not far from the shore.

"Will you make it?" the lad with the scar asked his companion.

"I think so. Matao told the group to be ready at five. We'll be going straight up to the Peace Line."

"Oh, are you from the fishermen's group?" Sumiko asked him.

The lad nodded.

"Please give my regards to Mata-chan."

"From whom?" the fisherman asked.

The lad with the scar waved his hand and said sternly: "No names."

The other looked at Sumiko and laughed. "You ought to see your face," he said. "It's all sooty."

Sumiko passed a hand over her cheek and it came away quite black.

"It must be those charcoal bags. Tell Mata-chan: thanks for the helmet and the fish. He will know who it is."

"I'll tell him," said the fisherman, dragging the boat out of the water.

"Let's go. We have a long walk ahead of us," said the lad with the scar, leading the way to a path winding up between rocks and gnarled pines.

8

They climbed to the crest of a hill, descended into a ravine beyond and took a path clinging to the edge of a precipice; descended into a dark gorge only to climb again, this time through a dense wood of maples and pines. In some places the young man helped Sumiko to clamber up a ledge or to cross a deep crevice. Thus they made their way to a path that led up and up through a bamboo grove and then a pinewoods to a deep fissure bridged by two logs bound together by ropes. They had to crawl across. A head appeared for an instant from behind a boulder. Sumiko's guide whistled twice and the head disappeared. They climbed higher, clinging to the branches of the pines, and at last emerged on a small plateau under a hanging rock.

"Wait here," said the young man.

He went down a rocky path which looked like the bed of a dried-up stream. At the far end of the path Sumiko saw two large boulders standing among trees like a gateway. The lad passed between the boulders and disappeared—evidently there was another steep drop beyond.

A fresh early morning breeze stirred the air. Sumiko felt her left shoulder and it gave an answering twinge. The dark blue hills emerged from the grey mist of morning. From the plateau she could see the tip of Hunchback Hill rising behind Monastery Hill, and beyond, the summit of Chestnut Hill looking vaguely like a helmet. Yugeh Hill was not visible. Beyond a ridge of mountains on the horizon the dawn gilded the rim of the leaden clouds. The morning shift would soon begin on the Peace Line, and within a few days they would be celebrating victory over there.

But final victory was still a long way off. Now the fight was beginning elsewhere, and there would be a new Peace Line. The fighting banners would be raised again and again before final victory was won. But victory was bound to come, as surely as the dawn now breaking over the distant hills.

Sumiko heard steps behind her.

"You may go. They are waiting for you," said the young man, puffing a pipe. "Admiring the view? Well, take a good look at it because you can't see anything of it down there and you won't be allowed up here. Well, good-bye! I'm going back now."

He nodded and strode off through the pines. Sumiko went over to the edge of the plateau and looked down. Someone appeared from behind the trees that hung over the boulders down below. He climbed one of the boulders, sat down with his legs crossed, and laid his hands against his ears. She started and rubbed her eyes. Was she dreaming? The figure on the boulder waved to her and repeated the gesture—the sign of the fox.

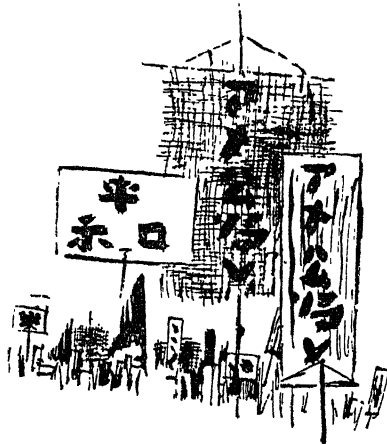
Sumiko turned and went over to the other side of the plateau.

"Good-bye, hills. I'm going down now," she said softly.

The girl from Hiroshima ran her eyes slowly over the distant summits and bowed. And a voice seemed to echo back from the hills: "Good-bye, little Sumiko. Carry on the fight for your country and for peace!"

Translated by Rose Prokofieva

Drawings by R. Gershannik



LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

YAKOV ELSBERG

THE AESTHETICS OF HERZEN

ALEXANDR HERZEN (1812-1870), thinker and writer, was one of the leading personalities of the liberation movement in Russia and, as Lenin pointed out, played an enormous role in paving the way for the Russian Revolution.

The name of Herzen came before the public eye in the 'forties of the 19th century, when his philosophical *Letters on the Study of Nature*, as well as a number of distinguished works of fiction and satirical pieces, first appeared.

Even then Herzen dreamed of open political activities as a journalist, championing the people's cause. But in the Russia of Nicholas I, in the stilling atmosphere of reaction, this was impossible, and it came to him with pain that he must go abroad where he could give full rein to his powers and serve his country best. His immediate aim was to create abroad a Russian press that would be free from censorship. He was convinced that his work would meet with response in Russia, and developments proved him right. *Kolokol* (The Tocsin), the weekly journal he published in London beginning with 1857, found its way into Russia, roused the young revolutionary forces there and was a powerful weapon in the fight against the autocracy and serfdom.

A brilliant publicist, Herzen was also a writer of high merit. His autobiographic work, *My Past and Thoughts*, written in the 'fifties and 'sixties, has become part of the treasure store of Russian classical literature.

"Herzen is a whole province, a country amazingly rich in thought," wrote Gorky, and these words convey the sense of intellectual richness, versatility and depth evoked by Herzen's writings and his vivid personality. Herzen's intellect and talent bear the living imprint of the Russian national character. He was justified in saying: "I belong to the Russian people with every fibre of my being; I work for them and they work in me. . . ."

Herzen nowhere expounded his aesthetic theories formally, but the numerous (although frequently fragmentary) comments on aesthetic problems which are scattered through his philosophical, journalistic and fictional productions constitute a whole body of aesthetic principles, marking an important stage in the development of Russian aesthetic thought. His philosophical writings of the 'forties, together with Belinsky's critical works,

were the heritage which Chernyshevsky developed in creating his materialist and revolutionary-democratic aesthetic system.

The aesthetic views of Herzen are marked by the features that characterize all of his work—the poetical vision of the true artist and the profound, many-sided intellect of the scholar. Herzen the artist, as it were, recreates for us the artistic productions he sees, conveys their power and charm, all the vividness of the aesthetic pleasure they give. Herzen the thinker gives us a clear understanding of the idea-content of those productions, of the spiritual wealth they contain, of their roots in social and political life and in national culture.

While he took deep delight in the great treasures of art, his enjoyment was inseparable from a profound *understanding* of them. He emphatically rejected the subjective view of the dilettante which substitutes for profound understanding mere cries of amazement and admiration, caprices of taste and of mood.

In the first article of his *Dilettantism in Science* series (1842-1843), Herzen sharply criticizes the philosophic subjectivism of “dilettantes” for whom “personal opinions are the court of final appeal,” remarking that “dictums of this sort are accepted only with regard to philosophy or aesthetics. The objective significance of other sciences, even the shoemaking craft, has been recognized long since. But everyone has his own philosophy, his own taste, and it never occurs to good folk that this means the positive denial of philosophy and aesthetics—for how can philosophy and aesthetics exist if they depend on and are altered by every Tom, Dick and Harry?”

Herzen strove to penetrate into the essence of a work of art, to find the basic feature determining its idea, to understand its intellectual and artistic message, its social role, its historical background. He did not dwell on what was casual, accidental.

He was interested in those works of art in which he could hear “the sorrows and the problems of the times”; in every artistic production he considered, he discerned the “reflection of history.” Furthermore, his evaluation of a work of art was frequently a basis for broad generalizations in the field of history, politics and philosophy.

To the author of *My Past and Thoughts* art was always a manifestation of the fullness and beauty of life. He censured the tendency to seek escape from reality and from politics by a withdrawal into art and aesthetic emotion, considering such development one-sided. It was his belief that an escape into art or into any other single sphere of spiritual life can provide no real answer to the quests of the mind.

Herzen ridiculed the devotees of “art for art’s sake,” calling them men of mere “sounds and forms.”

The man of advanced outlook, whatever his interests or occupation, should, in Herzen’s opinion, take an active part in contemporary public and political life, his response to events showing in his work. An artist who is a thinker, passionately and selflessly devoted to his work and dealing in it with major social problems—such was Herzen’s ideal of the exponent of progressive art.

Like all the Russian revolutionary-democrats, Herzen believed in the fusion of aesthetics and ethics. It is in this sense that he refers to the “inner aesthetics” inherent in man, *i.e.*, man’s desire to bring beauty into

his life. Beauty testifies to development, to growth and florescence, to the infinite richness of life.

Therefore, true beauty is always associated with the noblest emotions of man, with those elements of reality which show that society is advancing; it is associated with the life of the people, with progressive ideals.

Art helps discover the potentialities of man, of whole peoples, Herzen maintained. It reflects the paths by which mankind is advancing to a better future.

Believing in a future when beauty would enter into the everyday lives of the people and pervade the life of society, he considered the rule of reaction over the destinies of the world "contrary to historical aesthetics."

In the evolution of Herzen's views, with regard both to the general theory of knowledge and to aesthetics, a predominant and invigorating materialistic trend is plainly visible. It should be remembered that Herzen moved toward dialectical materialism in a struggle against idealism, on the one hand, and against vulgar materialism, on the other. While he considered the interpretation of spirit as "nature and nothing more" fruitful but insufficient, he had to surmount the limitations of vulgar materialism in his philosophic searchings.

In his *Letters on the Study of Nature* Herzen wrote:

"Thinking is not an extraneous addition but a continuation of the necessary development without which the universe is not complete that development which begins with spontaneous struggle . . . and ends, with the self-cognizing brain of the human head."

Herzen asserted that the poetry of life, its beauty, lies in the development of nature, in the richness, intensity and force of that development. Man, his consciousness, his reason represent the acme and summit of nature's evolution.

Elaborating this idea, Herzen touches upon the fundamental problem of aesthetics—the relation of art to life, the essence of beauty. True, he left us no general formula on this question like Chernyshevsky's famous definition: "*beauty is life* . . . beautiful is the object which expresses life, or reminds us of life," but this conclusion follows from a number of thoughts expressed in less definite terms.

Take the concept that life itself creates beauty and is its source. How close that is to Chernyshevsky's aesthetics is clear from a comparison with the following statement in Chernyshevsky's *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*: ". . . if we regard beauty as the fullness of life, then we must admit that the striving for life that permeates organic nature is at the same time a striving to create beauty." The same idea, *i.e.*, that nature itself is the source of beauty, that it is inherent in life to "create beauty," is embodied in the following, very similar, opinions expressed by Herzen and Chernyshevsky. Herzen considered the "beauty of the human body" the "great and single ideal" of art, and in speaking of the Italian Renaissance, he pointed out that the great artists of that age "invested heavenly images with all the beauty of earthly flesh; their ideal was man, a man transfigured, but man nevertheless. . . . Risen to a lofty ideal, pictorial art again set firm foot on earth and remained there." Chernyshevsky, for his part, called the human body the "most beautiful object on earth."

Characteristic of Herzen's aesthetic views is the idea that beauty is brought forth in the agony of giving birth to the new, expressed so poetically in Chapter 24 of *My Past and Thoughts*.

"Honour and glory to the old realist Goethe. He had the courage to set the woman with child beside the innocent maidens of romanticism, and did not fear to mould in his mighty verse the changing forms of the future mother, comparing them with the supple limbs of the future woman.

"Truly the woman who bears with the memory of past transports the whole cross of love, all its burden, sacrificing beauty and time, suffering, feeding from her own bosom, is one of the most beautiful and touching figures."

Thus, suffering, pain, the very renunciation of beauty can be the source of new beauty, the means of giving birth to the beautiful. This view of Herzen's is fundamentally opposed to the idealistic theories of "art for art's sake," "to the notions of beauty as aloof from life's struggles, contradictions and conflicts."

Herzen proved the active role of art in the life of society.

"... but as soon as we touch upon questions of life, of art, of morals," he wrote in *My Past and Thoughts*, "man is not only an observer and investigator, but at the same time himself an interested party. . . ." A true artist not only sees and reflects reality in his work but is also able to discern the trends of development of the people's life, to perceive the ways along which it is moving.

This idea of the active role of art is embodied also in Herzen's views on satire and humour.

Like the other revolutionary-democrats, Herzen attacked the theory that laughter is evoked by "harmless" things and, therefore, has no major social significance. It is obsolete or moribund phenomena that affect the sense of the comic and it is against them that satire and laughter are directed, he maintained. Laughter gives one a sense and foretaste of victory over all that is reactionary and stagnant. This is the attitude expressed in his appraisal of Gogol's *The Inspector-General*. "Laughter," Herzen wrote, "is one of the most powerful weapons against all that is obsolete and yet, God knows how, lives on, a pompous ruin impeding the growth of fresh life and frightening the weak . . . laughter is certainly not a joking matter and we will not forego it. A history of laughter would be an extremely interesting work. People do not laugh in church, at court, on parade, in front of the department head, the local police officer or the German steward. Serfs may not smile in the presence of their master. Only equals laugh among themselves. Laughter levels, and that is what people who are afraid of having their importance punctured do not want."

Opposing the liberal theory of humour, Herzen emphasized that laughter and ridicule are produced by the knowledge that the things they are directed against are doomed. "Laughter is one of the most powerful weapons of destruction," he wrote. "The laughter of Voltaire struck and scorched like lightning. Laughter causes idols to fall, glory and position to collapse; the miracle-working icon becomes a tarnished, poorly drawn picture. With its revolutionary, levelling power laughter is extremely

popular and sticks like glue. Beginning in the modest study of the writer, it spreads in widening circles to the very bounds of literacy."

Revolutionary force pervaded Herzen's own laughter, directed against tsarist autocracy and serfdom, the historical doom of which he did not doubt.

And he keenly appreciated the irony characteristic of Russian literature of the time of Radishchev and the other 18th-century Russian enlighteners. "Our native irony, irony, our comforter and avenger," he wrote.

One of the instruments for influencing social development, Herzen maintained, was the theatre.

"The stage, as someone has said, is the parliament of literature, its rostrum," he wrote in his diary in 1842. "It can resolve the pressing problems of the day, or at least discuss them, and the effect of this discussion is extremely potent."

The same idea was elaborated in his article "Concerning a Certain Drama." "All that weighs and presses on the people of a given epoch makes its way on to the stage and is commented on by the inexorable logic of the events and actions unfolded before the eyes of the audience. And the conclusions this commentary leads to are not abstract but pulsing with life, irrefutable and many-sided."

The actor, the artist, is to Herzen an active participant in public life. In another article of the *Dilettantism in Science* series he included the actor in the phalanx of progressive intellectuals.

Herzen stood for realism in art, for living truth. When he said that Shchepkin, the great Russian actor, "had created *truth* on the Russian stage," this was the highest praise he could have uttered.

"To lie with the brush" was a crime in his eyes.

What tremendous importance Herzen attached to the truth of artistic representation can be seen from his appraisal of Russian prose in an article entitled "The Russian People and Socialism" (1851). Speaking of the castigating power of the Russian novel, he declared that "The awareness of our condition, the truth" that finds expression in Russian literature would deliver Russia from the affliction caused by the reactionary rule of Nicholas I.

Running through Herzen's comments on aesthetics is the idea of the historical evolution of art, of the changing ideal of beauty. Indeed, it is the idea of the infinite potentialities of the development of art that constitutes the foundation of his aesthetic outlook.

Civilization "... is infinite, like thought, like art," he wrote in his book *From the Other Shore*. "Goethe long ago maintained that beauty is transient, for only that which is transient can be beautiful. This offends people. Man instinctively wishes to preserve everything he likes. Having been born, he wants to live eternally; when he falls in love he wants to love and be beloved all his life as in the first moment of avowal. Such a state of immobility, however, is contrary to the spirit of life. Life always finds fulfilment in the present moment and, while endowing human beings with a capacity for maximum enjoyment, nature does not guarantee either life or pleasure and is not

responsible for their continuing. In this incessant movement of all living things, in these daily changes, nature renews itself, lives and is eternally young. That is why each moment of history is beautiful, perfect, complete in its own way, like each year, with spring and summer, winter and autumn, with storms and fine weather."

Herzen was convinced that the artistic development of mankind, while complex and contradictory, is on the whole progressive, that the world treasure house of culture grows fuller and richer as time goes on. He dwelt on the imperishability of the plastic charm of Greek and Roman sculpture, of the spirituality of Gothic art, of the powerful, passionate Renaissance ideal of beauty, of the stately classicism of Corneille and Racine and the intellectual incisiveness of the literature of the French Enlightenment.

In the realism of Pushkin he saw a combination of aesthetic elements relating to different epochs of world artistic development. And he considered this richness and versatility of Pushkin's work an extremely important landmark in the development of Russian literature and a major contribution to world art.

Herzen's aesthetic and materialist views were rooted in the revolutionary-democratic doctrine that progressive art must be popular and national in character. Like Belinsky and the other Russian revolutionary democrats, Herzen believed that art in its development reflects and reveals the finest features of the national character. Genuine art is always vividly national in quality; therein lies its power, temperament and patriotism. In his approach to the problems of life, art and morality, the artist cannot help reflecting "the impressions made by lullabies once sung to him, by his native fields and mountains, the customs of his land and its entire tenor of life."

A cardinal, essential feature of progressive, truly creative art, Herzen felt, was the anticipation and reflection of the pressing needs of the people.

"The poet or the artist," he wrote, "in his truest work is always national. Whatever he does, whatever aim and thought he may have in his work, he consciously or unconsciously expresses some elements of the national character. . . . Poets really are, as the Romans called them, prophets; only they do not foretell what is not and will be by chance, but put into words what is unrecognized, what exists in the dim consciousness of the masses, what is still slumbering in them."

Love of Russia, that feeling of "boundless, all-embracing love for the Russian people and Russian life, for the Russian turn of mind" Herzen referred to as prophetic.

And it was this prophetic anticipation of a future free Russia that he perceived in the searchings of his country's foremost artists. He wrote that Shchepkin, for instance, was "one of those intimations of the deep-lying forces and potentialities of the Russian nature which makes our faith in Russia's future impregnable."

Herzen called for an art faithful to the finest national traditions, an art which fully conveyed the specific features of Russian life and the "Russian character," which was intellectually advanced and imbued with the most progressive ideas of its age.

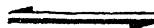
At the same time his views on Russian art have nothing in common with the theory of national exclusiveness. He approached the work of Russian artists in the light of the problems facing all of mankind.

Like the other great revolutionary-democrats Herzen insisted upon a progressive outlook on the part of the artist, an outlook combining revolutionary and patriotic traditions.

One of the main tenets of Herzen's aesthetics is that art gives expression not only to the temperament of the people but also to their intellect. Art should inspire faith in life and in the power of man.

Herzen dreamed of an art moving constantly ahead, an art become the possession of the emancipated people and bringing man radiant joy and rich spiritual satisfaction.

The traditions of Herzen's aesthetics are the traditions of an art living a boundlessly rich and many-sided spiritual life and augmenting the treasures of national and world culture. They are the traditions of an art that is politically purposeful, actively contributes to public life and combines the creative development of the classical heritage with bold pioneering.



BOOKS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

"Whom to take as a model?"
(Mayakovsky)

The Destinies of Books

Habent sua fata libelli—books have their own destinies. If you want to test correctness of the old saying, ask a librarian to allow you to walk along the narrow alleys between his bookshelves, look at the books whose destinies interest you and then examine their issuing slips.

The issuing slip is the book's "work card." When one looks at it, one can visualize very clearly how different are the working lives of books after they arrive in a library.

One book rests scarcely one day a year on the shelf; it is at work all the time. How this favoured one, this hard worker in its worn binding, must be envied by its idle, bored neighbour who sits forgotten on the shelf for months on end.

Then have a talk with the library staff, or, better still, work for a week or two issuing and receiving books in some modest district, factory or village library.

Notice the books you are asked for; listen to the comments of the readers as they return books; note which books they refuse politely but firmly when they are offered them; listen to their whispered comments as they wait for their turn, their requests for advice from their neighbours or from yourself as they search for something that will please them among the books displayed on the counter.

No readers' conference can reveal so sharply and intimately the relations between the book and the reader as these days at a library counter.

A. Makarenko, who was as powerful a writer as he was a teacher, summed up the matter well when he said: "In the hands of Vera Ignatyevna" (the librarian in Makarenko's *Book for Parents*) "when she fills in the issuing slips, the books behave in different ways. Some of them wait resignedly while the details are being entered; others are leaping from her hands, excited by the inviting look in the reader's eye; others are being stubborn and want to return to their place on the shelf, because they are aware of the cold, unwelcoming gaze from across the counter."

How exact and truthful is that description! And how important it is that the writer as well as the critic should know this feeling of almost physical attraction and repulsion between book and reader, a phenomenon which is the everyday experience of a librarian.

The impressions obtained behind a library counter are valuable for a writer; but to avoid any suggestion that these impressions are subjective, call statistics to your aid. Statistics can tell much about the destinies of books. . . .

Three years ago a Moscow newspaper made a study of the readers' demand for books. Questionnaires were sent to scores of libraries throughout the country.

These libraries ranged in size from that of the Magnitogorsk chain of metallurgical factories (which even then had 200,000 volumes of fiction and served, with its branches, 30,000 readers) to small libraries in remote villages and mobile libraries.

The facts revealed by these questionnaires were exceedingly interesting. They showed that there was a constant or in some cases an increasing demand for certain books and that there were "lucky" books read by practically all the library's subscribers.

In their comments which they appended to their statistical report, the librarians of Orevichi village wrote: "These books are out with the people all the time. We don't see much of them in the library."

But there were other figures, figures which showed how short-lived were some literary "successes."

There would be a great interest in a book at first, but then slowly — or not so slowly—interest would die down.

At times the statistics were in sharp disagreement with what the critics said.

The successes these critics predicted often did not come, while on the other hand unpraised books were widely read.

In other words, the figures in the statistical tables lived and argued and became participants and witnesses in the lively literary debates which go on continually in the country—the constant flow of readers' letters to the press and publishing houses, the readers' conferences which are always going on in scores of places at once and, above all, those opinions and arguments heard across the counters of libraries and book shops.

"Manual of Life"

From the mass of statistical details received from the libraries it was possible to pick out certain clearly defined patterns, notably the following: In nearly all the libraries the list of books in constantly-growing demand was headed by Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*. Here are some figures on the subject:

In the Orel regional library it was read by 80 readers in the first half of 1949; in the corresponding period of 1950 the figure was 130, in 1951, 280, and so on.

In the Zhitomir regional library the comparable figures were 450, 510, 630. In the Magnitogorsk library, already mentioned, the figures were 1150, 1850, 2100; in the small village library of Kokpekti (Semi-palatinsk region) 100, 205, 285.

In 1932 Ostrovsky wrote with satisfaction in a letter to his friend, P. Novikov: "They have decided to print about 10,000 copies." Since that time more than four million copies of his book have been printed.

What is the secret of this book's attraction for the reader?

The great Russian critics Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov in determining the place of literature in society, referred to it as a "manual of life."

Ostrovsky's novel is perhaps the finest example of a book becoming a "manual of life." It is one of the most captivating of those works of world literature which tell of the life of young people in the first third of the 20th century, a life that was difficult and stormy, full of dangers and struggles and privations, of despair and the conquest of despair, the first love that proved false and a new love that remained true to the last breath, a life full of high romanticism and noble achievement and the unembellished truth of everyday life.

It is a "manual of life" because of its influence on the life and formation of character of the Soviet people, primarily of the generation which reached manhood in the days of the Second World War.

In the lives of scores of famous people such as Maresyev, Koshevoy, Kosmodemyanskaya and hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file people the reading and re-reading of Ostrovsky's book became a step in the formation of their characters. But how did the book achieve this wonderful result? What enabled it to play such a role in the lives of our young people?

Mayakovsky's words which are used as an epigraph to this article "Whom to take as a model?" express that special attitude which young people have towards books.

When a young man chooses his path in life, when he works out his attitude towards his surroundings, when he is forming his character, he searches for examples.

To him a book is more than mere reading material: it is an active participant in the dialogue with life in which young people are continually engaged—What should one do to avoid living an aimless life? What constitutes a great deed? Why is love such a wonderful thing but often so difficult and so painful?

That is why books most successful with young people are those which give the answers to the greatest and most complicated questions young people put to themselves when their searching eyes pierce life as it confronts them.

The most comprehensive description of Ostrovsky's book is that it is a young man's struggle for the fulfilment of his ideals. But is not any story of a young man—when it is given as a story of the interaction between his philosophical, political and aesthetic ideals on the one hand and his surroundings on the other—one of the main subjects of world literature and the major theme of European prose of the 19th and 20th centuries?

Recourse to History

"Lost Illusions" is not merely the title of one of the most inspired works on this subject; it is not merely the outcome of Lucien de Rubempré's clash with reality. "Lost illusions" is the leit-motiv and quintessence of

all that was written by the great writers of the distant and recent past on the subject.

Novels about young men in bourgeois society were novels about how man is conquered, how man surrenders, how his hope for honest success proves an illusion, and how even the illusion is lost like the "light that failed," as Kipling entitled his best book.

The image of a young man who dives into the unequal struggle not to change society but to change his own, and *only* his own, place in it—that is the most characteristic image in the literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, and it has quite a number of truly tragic variants.

Even in the "salon" version of this tragedy, in, say, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there still survives much of the great tragedy of that theme.

It may be recalled that when Gorky explained the idea of a series of novels entitled *History of a Young Man of the 19th Century*, he stressed that, together with the decline of bourgeois society from its early heroic period, the image of the young individualist too became smaller and more effete.

At the same time, a different image was becoming stronger, brighter and more meaningful, the image of a fighter for knowledge, progress and freedom, a fighter not for his own personal happiness but for the happiness of all humanity.

While Balzac's title, *Lost Illusions*, sounds as a leit-motiv for a whole gallery of these individualists, the leit-motiv of the cohorts of true fighters is heard in the words of Giordano Bruno, who gave the title *The Heroic Enthusiasts* to a remarkable philosophical poem.

In this poem, which, even centuries after it was written, astonishes with its forceful expression of unyielding, freedom-loving thought, there is a wonderful passage on heroic enthusiasm being a norm of human morality.

When one of his characters said, "Not everyone can reach what one or two can reach," Bruno, through the mouth of Tansillo, replied:

"It would be enough if everyone *tried* his best to reach it, for the heroic spirit is more satisfied with a gallant failure or honest misfortune in some effort which shows his nobility, than with perfect success in deeds less noble."

Giovagnoli's Spartacus, Voynich's the Gadfly, Gutzkow's Uriel Acosta, Stendhal's Missirilli, are among those images of real heroes which captured the hearts of generations of young people, because the life of each one of them was lighted with the reflected light of the same fire which flared up in the words of Giordano Bruno.

This theme of heroic enthusiasm and uncompromising fight sounds especially strongly in Russian literature.

Oath at the City Gates

It is necessary at this point to describe one scene from the memoirs of Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*, but first it should be recalled how often the West-European novel of last century described a young man arriving

at the outskirts of a capital and contemplating the panorama stretched out before him.

He gazes at the clusters of houses; he speculates about the passions boiling up under the roofs, the evils lurking in its side streets, the riches behind the stone walls; and he feels that to avoid being swallowed up or becoming a failure in this city, he must, so to speak, storm its ramparts.

How many times in these novels did some young hero, after surveying a city from a hill on its outskirts, take an oath as he reached the city gates—an oath that within those gates he would attain to power and glory by hook or by crook!

Here is another kind of scene: "At Luzhniki we took a boat across the Moscow river. . . . My father, as usual, walked on, gloomy and bowed. At his side hurried Karl Ivanovich with his short steps, pouring gossip and chatter into father's ear. We went ahead and climbed the Vorobyovy Hills to the proposed site of the Vitberg Cathedral.

"Panting and hot, we stood there, wiping the sweat off our brows. The sun was setting; the cupolas were shining; the city lay immense before us at the foot of the hills.

A fresh breeze was blowing. We stood there for a time and then suddenly threw our arms around one another and swore before all Moscow that we would devote our whole life to the fight which we had chosen. . . .

"We did not then know the full power of the forces we were to fight. But we accepted the challenge. That power broke much in us, but it was not that power which defeated us. Nor did we surrender, despite all the blows that rained on us. The scars we received were honourable scars. . . ."

That is an extract from Herzen's memoirs where they refer to the oath which he and Ogaryov took as youths to fight for freedom and the happiness of the people.

Thus we see quite a new beginning to the life-paths of those other heroes, both in history and in history's reflection, literature. Whole generations of Russian—and not only Russian—youth would turn to Chernyshevsky's novel, *What Is To Be Done?* For them it was something much more than entertaining reading matter. It not only posed the question in its title to young people, it also gave an answer, with as great clarity and persuasive force as was possible for a revolutionary writer in the conditions of his time.

There was yet another quality which multiplied by many times the inspirational value of the book: the reader knew that the author's words and deeds were in harmony; that he did not invent the high courage of his heroes but himself possessed it in full measure; that the struggle was extolled not by an onlooker but by one who himself was in the thick of the struggle.

The unifying of the author himself with the ideal he expresses is very dear to the reader.

This was exemplified with especial force by the fact that at the turn of the century readers took the title of Gorky's hymn to the coming revolution, *The Song of the Stormy Petrel*, and, rephrasing it, applied it to Gorky himself,— "the stormy petrel of the Revolution."

Harmoniously Balanced Man

The theme of heroic enthusiasm was the line of development which in its continuation was to produce the image of Pavel Korchagin, the hero of Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*. In this lies the secret of the continuing success of this novel.

It is accepted by youth as a manual of life because it is full of heroic enthusiasm. The heroes of earlier books on the same theme, heroes like the Gadfly, were representatives of a still small and weak army of young fighters; but the image of Pavel Korchagin, a product of the Revolution, embraces the best traits of a whole generation of contemporaries of October 1917 and their younger brothers.

The clearness of world outlook, the relentlessness, the great moral force, the feeling of constant ties with their comrades and their country—those were the qualities which prompted Ostrovsky to utter the words which became a supreme expression of the moral code of the Soviet Man: "Man's dearest possession is life, and it is given to him to live but once. He must live so as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose, never know the shame of a mean and petty past". . . .

Each book about young people as it comes off the press is launched into a sea of discussions among young people, discussions about friendship, love, the life ahead. Discussions of this kind are part and parcel of their lives; they are a form of work which goes on continually in the heart of every young person and in every group of young persons—the work of character-building. Any book that has nothing to add to this discussion, either a troubling problem or the answer to any problem, can have but one fate: it will not be read. But warm is the welcome awaiting any book that helps to answer the questions: How to live one's life? and Whom to take as a model?

Although Alexandr Fadeyev's *The Young Guard* told the story of the courageous struggle and death of the heroes of Krasnodon underground, it faced not the past but the future.

The unconquerable character of the clear, free way of Soviet life is shown by Fadeyev in one of the most touching scenes of *The Young Guard* when he stresses that even in the years of war, even in the most tragic moments, Soviet youth did not forget the search for noble paths in life.

One anxious day two lads trudge together in the stream of the retreat—Vanya and Zhora, who later become the heroes of the novel. What do they speak about?

About their future, about the choice of some interesting profession that would be the most useful for their Motherland; about friendship; about the poetry of love and the poetry of struggle. Their talk is overheard by an unassuming officer, a major just out of hospital. He listens intently.

It might seem that to this man, who had felt the full burden of the first period of the war, who had tasted the full bitterness of retreat, the boys' words could only be irritating, and would sound like the rapturous outpourings of youngsters who do not know the trials and hardships that war brings. Their youthful optimism might well meet with a sobering

sermon from an older and more experienced man. But no. In these talks of a future from which the lads could not and would not part even in moments of danger, the major sees a promise of a more glorious life ahead.

Later the major's two young companions were to prove that theirs was no vain, visionary talk of the future, that although they were, like their prototypes in real life, scarcely more than children when they became embroiled in war, they understood that the future had to be fought for at all costs, even at the cost of life itself.

In the working notebooks of Pyotr Pavlenko which were published posthumously a short time ago, there is the following entry: "A patriot is one who at the most critical time for his Motherland, takes upon himself her most difficult behest."

This is the sentiment which inspired most of the Young Guards to their immortal deeds. Pavlenko's words might well be carved on the stones that mark their graves.

The Young Guard's influence, however, works not only through the positive example of those brief but heroic lives; it has also the image of a traitor, Stakhovich, described with a terrible force of wrathful contempt. Fadeyev, when he examines the origin of Stakhovich's treachery shows that it was connected with ideas fostered in him since his childhood, ideas of his own "specialness" and, therefore, of the overwhelming importance of his own life.

The works of progressive writers help the reader to distinguish the true if sometimes clumsily expressed feelings and the real if sometimes deeply hidden values from the glittering, sceptical words of a man who has cut himself away from life and the creators of life.

This theme is an important factor in character-building. Young people go to a manual not only to find an answer to the question, What should they do? but also to the question, What should they not do?

To refer to a novel as a "manual of life" does not imply that young people go to a book merely for ready-made examples or that the inspirational importance of a book lies only in the fact that it gives examples to emulate. But, with that proviso in mind, it should not be forgotten that this force of example exists. It found especially worthy expression in Boris Polevoy's *The Story of a Real Man*.

Commissar Vorobyov, a fellow patient in hospital with Meresyev, a pilot who had lost both his legs, wanted to bring back Meresyev's will to live by means of books like *How the Steel Was Tempered*.

Before me is a book of verse, *The Team on Duty*. Its author is the young poet Ivan Shamov. His captivating lyrical poem "Bonfire in the Fields" has for some years now been sung by our young people, especially in the country; but few know that the author of this jaunty, jovial song has for long been a bed-ridden invalid, just as was Nikolai Ostrovsky.

In 1950 when Shamov was still a newcomer to literary work, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published an article of his "The Books that Help Me to Live." In it he told how in days of despair, when it became clear that he, once an airman, could never fly again—could not even walk—he was helped by reading about Korchagin and Meresyev. There are many more cases like these of novels being "manuals of life" in the most direct way—as providing examples to follow. But, however shining these

examples may be, the educative value of books is not confined to this one aspect.

In the text of an address by Ostrovsky to the Ninth Ukrainian Comsomol Congress there is the following passage: "The young people of our age are valiant fighters. They carry within them the best human qualities—the wonderful and beautiful feeling of friendship that is based on mutual respect; consideration for others; freedom from envy of the success of others; the fostering of the idea that what comes first is the general good, an aim which instead of lessening one's own individuality raises it to a higher level."

The fostering of all these qualities, by means of a wide range of exemplary images and by the development of the action of a novel, is the constant task of Soviet literature.

It is difficult to name all the post-war works in which young heroes figure. There are many such books. That is understandable. Writers are drawn to the generation which met the severe trials of war in its youth and matured in the fires of war.

Young people are the heroes of the novel *In the Trenches of Stalingrad* by Viktor Nekrasov; the scout Travkin in Emanuel Kazakevich's *The Star* is also a young man.

Young people have a prominent place too in novels of post-war Soviet life, as for example Sergei Tutarinov in Semyon Babayevsky's *Cavalier of the Gold Star* and Alyosha in Galina Nikolayeva's *Harvest*. There appeared also a great number of books about students as, for example, *University* by G. Konovalov, *Three Men in Grey Greatcoats* and *Zhenya Maslova* by V. Dobrovolsky, *Steadfastness* by K. Lokotkov, *Students* by Y. Trifonov, and *Our Summer* by Y. Uspenskaya.

All these books attracted great attention among readers and became the subjects of lively discussion in clubs, at readers' conferences and in the press.

The play, *Years of Wanderings*, by A. Arbuzov, also about the life of young people, is now in its second season in the theatres of the country and always draws large crowds.

The themes of these books are different. In some of them the characters are people who went through the war, and they tell about the return to peaceful life, about people still young although they have undergone this tempering in the severe trials of war time. The heroes of other books are young people fresh from school who are stepping out into the world for the first time.

The talent and experience of the authors vary greatly. Some authors are of the same age as their own heroes, and their books combine the freshness of almost autobiographical narrative with the still youthful inability to see their own hero "from outside." Others, like Arbuzov, are experienced writers.

However different they are, these books and plays have one thing in common: their central problems are ethical problems. Their themes develop through clashes between the different ideas of what constitutes real friendship and love, what is the measure of a man's responsibility towards his vocation, how a young person should live so as to avoid being ashamed of having wasted his years.

Arbuzov used as an epigraph to his play a child's question, "Where do the days go to?"

He answers the question through what befalls his main hero. "Where do the days go to?" asks Alexandr Vedernikov, after he realizes the bitter cost of the egoistical mistakes he committed in his not-so-distant youth. A man whom he met at the front said to him: "Where *can* they go to? Nowhere. They are here with us. A well-filled day stays alive even after our death."

This great theme of how life should be lived so that its days will not vanish into nowhere echoes in the lyrical poem by the young poet Rasul Hamzatov:

*Unhurried Time, with measured stride
Walks, ever watchful, at our side.
Nothing escapes its calm appraise
Of how we use our borrowed days—
For days are loaned, not given free.
How stands the score twixt Time and me?
What do I owe for every day
That I sent empty on its way?*

Because the central problems of the works mentioned above are ethical problems; the uprooting of egotism is one of the principal themes in them.

"Should one cherish real achievement, true feelings, friendship and love, and fight for these things at every step without fear of difficulties, without fear of seeming at times naive or ridiculous? Or is it enough, in your opinion, to pay lip-service to all these ideas while laughing at them inside yourself and keeping to your own thoughtless, easy and profitable path, satisfied with the ersatz in everything because it brings fewer troubles, satisfied with half-felt feelings, casual love and a veneer of friendship? Is it enough to love one thing passionately with true feeling and talent, grudging neither time nor labour for it—yourself and your own future?"

All these questions are answered in Trifonov's *Students*, answered by the feelings of its heroes and by the logical development of all its images. The answer is a demand for a straightforward, honest approach to science, to friendship, to love. It shows the power and beauty of simple but noble feelings; it demands a serious, exacting attitude to one's surroundings. In that lies the strength of the novel and its importance as an ethical force.

The speech quoted above is the structural climax and the idea-culmination of the conflict which gradually develops throughout the novel as the living nerve of its action. What Vadim Belov sees is a clash of principles and the position he takes is in accord with his growing scientific beliefs: what Sergei Palavin sees is only the clash of different ambitions. It seems to Palavin that the participants in scientific arguments are not interested in the essence of the matter argued and that Belov fights the deadening scholasticism of Professor Kozelsky only to draw attention to himself and to advance himself. A war of ideas is going on, but Palavin sees in it only petty intrigues.

He has no use for principles, but he manoeuvres so as to use the controversy for his own selfish ends. He supports Professor Kozelsky passionately, and then when the tables are turned, he deserts him and delivers a sackcloth-and-ashes speech.

The true face of Palavin shows itself little by little, the face of an indifferent, cold-blooded, calculating egoist, until it becomes so clear that Belov, who at the beginning of the novel was his friend, is able to express sharply and clearly the reasons for the break between them.

Theirs is no petty quarrel; it is a clash between two outlooks on life—on the one-hand the outlook of the majority of young people brought up in the spirit of serving their Motherland, and on the other hand the outlook of an egoist who wants to live his life only for himself.

In the collective condemnation of this egoist, the themes of heroic enthusiasm and self-loving egoism cross swords. I have noticed several times at student-reader conferences, that when speakers discussed the character of Sergei Palavin and attacked his philosophy of life, they called him "the little Rastignac." This description revealed a clear understanding of the fact that Palavin's attitude to life is connected with survivals of the Rastignac individualistic attitude which is still not eliminated from the minds of some people.

Among the young people in Uspenskaya's *Our Summer*, two quite young characters, Nikita and Varya, capture the reader's sympathy immediately and completely by the sincerity and strength of their feelings and their determination not to surrender their ideals neither in great nor small matters.

One of the elderly characters, Fyodor Fyodorovich Lopatin, meditates about Varya, and his appraisal is easily accepted by readers because the whole of the earlier development of action, both of the novel and the characters of its heroes, convinced them of its justice.

"In this girl who grew up in a children's home, Lopatin valued what he considered the most precious thing in a human being—the ability to accept as one's own the interests, joys and misfortunes of other people. In Varya this quality was innate and natural.

"More than that, she did not even realize that she possessed it. She would always sacrifice her personal interests for the communal interests and would do it freely and easily and without noticing it. This attitude to life, the essence and significance of which were her complete identification with the fortunes of her friends and of the whole country, was as natural to her as breathing.

"Lopatin had long before this divined the significance of all those things that Varya did, either by obeying her Comsomol conscience or by critically observing herself from outside. And in his own way he had called these things 'the hallmarks of the new man.'

"It was this new man of Communist society, whose creation is the main task and final aim of the Revolution.

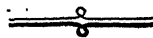
"From year to year Lopatin met more and more of these 'new people'. . . .

"In them lives an unconquerable faith in the joy of work, in human strength and friendship and, most important of all, a proud, flawless love for their country.

"Love of country, faith in its justness and might, were for these new people dominant, unwavering and personal feelings; and the well-being and progress of their country meant to them far more than their own lives. That was understandable because the happiness of their country determined their own happiness."

The image of the "new man," that harmoniously balanced man of whom the great minds of the past had dreamed, the man whose words, thoughts and deeds are ever in accord, the man in whom all the best qualities are in constant development, occupies the leading role in Soviet literature. And when Soviet literature depicts him, it does so not as an outside observer would.

On the contrary, in the creation of this man, which is determined by the whole of Soviet reality, an important role belongs to literature, for literature is an inseparable part of that reality which unfailingly answers youth's question, "Whom to take as a model?"



THE GLORY OF SEVASTOPOL

(Notes of a Writer)

IN THE early days of November 1854 a young lieutenant of artillery drove post-haste over the southern steppes of the Ukraine and on across Perekop, the isthmus linking the Crimea with the mainland, pushing forward to Sevastopol through villages jammed with troops. The city was besieged and the young officer was worried. In his diary there already stood the anxious lines: "The landing at Sevastopol tortures me. . . . I'm sick with worry. . . . Matters in Sevastopol hang on a thread."

It had been raining for days and, needless to say, there was nothing like the asphalt highway that leads to Sevastopol today. The only road north from the city—its lifeline—had been churned into a sea of mud in which the ox-drawn ammunition carts floundered hopelessly.

The lieutenant let nothing stop him. He sped on until, on November 7, he crossed the North Bay by boat and found himself in the besieged city. Four days later he wrote in his diary: "All the rumours that tormented me on the way have proved false. . . ."

The young officer was twenty-five-year-old Count Leo Tolstoy.

At that date, he was still unknown to Russia as a writer, although the magazine *Sovremennik* had already published his *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, as well as *The Raid*, a story about the Caucasian Army, in whose ranks Tolstoy began his military service. But all these early efforts were modestly signed with the initials L. N. or L. N. T.

From the Caucasus he was transferred to the artillery headquarters of the Danube Army and it was from there that he hurried as soon as the first shots rang out in Sevastopol.

Sevastopol was founded on the shores of attractive bays remarkably well suited to shelter a fleet. This port, from which Admirals Ushakov and Nakhimov set out to fight the aggressors, has gone down in Russian history as the symbol of national valour.

No sooner did the young officer arrive in the city than he threw himself into the hottest battles. He fought on the ramparts of the celebrated Fourth Bastion which withstood several attacks a day. There, on the high wall, amidst the flower-beds of the Historical Boulevard, a small marble column bearing the name of Tolstoy stands to this day. Embedded in the ground some fifty paces away lie the guns of Tolstoy's battery.

Dmitri Kholendro (born 1921) was a war correspondent during the Second World War. After the war he lived and worked in the Crimea for several years. There he published his first books: *In The Crimea* (from notes of a war correspondent), a volume of short stories called *The Rolling Sea* and a novel entitled *Mountains in Flower*. At present he is attending the advanced courses in literature offered by the Union of Soviet Writers.

Several of A. Kokorin's illustrations to Leo Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Tales* are used in this article.

Leo Tolstoy hastened to the besieged city as an officer and a patriot. But he was a writer, and it was in a frontline dug-out that, oblivious to the thundering cannon, he began to write his famous *Sevastopol Tales*. The first of them, *Sevastopol in December*, appeared in the June issue of the *Sovremennik* with the following note from the editors: "We deem ourselves fortunate to be able to offer to our readers articles of such vital interest and which, moreover, are written by an author whose stories *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, *The Raid* and *A Billiard-Marker's Notes* have already won the attention and lively sympathy of the Russian reading public."

The second story, *Sevastopol in May*, was mutilated by the censors and was published unsigned under the title *Spring Night*. It was followed by *Sevastopol in August*, and this, the third story, was signed "L. N. Tolstoy."

The Sevastopol stories were eagerly read because, as their author himself said, their main hero was the truth. That truth was as stern and unflattering to the whole autocratic system as it was to the top army command.

Sevastopol brought Tolstoy into close contact with the people, with the ordinary muzhik clad in a soldier's or sailor's uniform, and it was in that muzhik that he perceived the chief patriotic force, the principal defender of the besieged, flaming city.

In his first tale Tolstoy seems to be wandering about the city and looking at it with the eyes of a newcomer. What does he see there, what attracts his attention?—A heavy wagon drawn by camels lumbering past to the cemetery to bury its gory load of corpses; an old boatman, an ex-sailor, with a flaxen-haired boy calmly rowing across the bay under fire; an emaciated soldier recovering from a grave wound, sitting up in his hospital bed: he will not speak about himself but you can learn from others that when he was wounded he stopped his stretcher-bearers that he might see his battery fire a volley, and that now, with one leg amputated, he was asking to be sent back to the guns "to teach the young men, seeing as he himself couldn't do the work any more." A young warrant officer complains that things are bad on the Fourth Bastion—only it's not the bombs and bullets he has in mind, not a bit of it. It's the mud that's so bad—you can't get to the battery for it.

In each portrait, in each detail Tolstoy showed and emphasized as the most important factor the simplicity, level-headedness and tenacity of the defenders of Sevastopol. There are no generals on prancing steeds, no martial music, no waving banners and beating drums in his stories—only the everyday, valorous labour of war, only people on whose faces the dangers and suffering of war have left "the impress of conscious dignity of noble thought and feeling."

"So now you have seen the defenders of Sevastopol right on the line of defence . . ." wrote Tolstoy. "The principal conviction you have carried away with you is the gratifying one that Sevastopol cannot be taken, and not only cannot Sevastopol be taken, but nowhere can the strength of the Russian people be impaired, and this you have seen not in the multitude of traverses, breastworks, intricate labyrinths of trenches, mines and cannons, piled one atop the other, of which you could make nothing, but in the eyes, words and actions—in what is called the spirit—of the defenders of Sevastopol."

In his second and third tales Tolstoy drew broader pictures of the battles and of the arduous life of the army, but again, as always, his inter-

est was centred on human characters and human feelings in their truest expressions. Highly striking figures are the Kozeltsov brothers, honest, selfless men representative of that class of Russian officers who were always to be found at the side of their soldiers, who shared their life and their dangers and bore on their shoulders the intolerably heavy burden of the defence. And for all that there is no outward show of heroism in the manner of Volodya Kozeltsov's dying, the reader acknowledges it as an expression of human courage and heroism.

Mikhail and Volodya Kozeltsov differed from the general run of officers, especially staff officers, from the numerous adjutants—aristocrats who were ready "to start a battle and send a hundred men or so to their death for the sake of promotion or one-third additional pay."

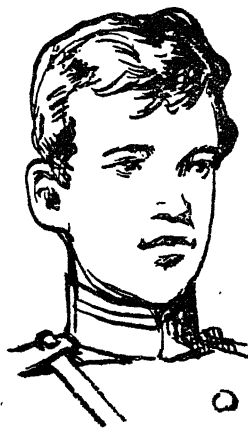
While extolling the great courage and the nobility of spirit of such men as Kornilov, Istomin and Nakhimov, Tolstoy ruthlessly exposed the vanity of the aristocratic officers—especially in his *Sevastopol in May*—which was the reason he fell foul of the censors. Nor did he limit himself to the protests he voiced in his stories. He submitted one insistent memorandum after the other describing the hard and unjust lot of the soldiers, but these memoranda were left to gather dust in the military offices, and the military magazine Tolstoy suggested publishing with the idea of subsequently turning it into a soldiers' newspaper was forbidden by the tsar.

There was even a caustic song sung by the men of nearly the entire Crimean army that was composed in part by young artillery officer Tolstoy. The song ridiculed the incompetent higher officers who lost the battle at Chernaya River. As a matter of fact, those officers subsequently lost the whole campaign, laying bare Russia's political, social and military ills. As V. I. Lenin said, the Crimean War revealed the rottenness and impotence of feudal Russia.

But one need read only a single page of the *Sevastopol Tales* to be convinced of the heroism and patriotism of the city's rank-and-file defenders.

"Men cannot endure such terrible conditions for the sake of a military decoration, or promotion, or under threat of punishment; there must be some other, higher motive," wrote Tolstoy and showed how ordinary men of the people "did not lose heart in those grim days but rose in spirit and gladly prepared to die—not for the city, but for their country."

Tolstoy conceived a deep and lasting regard for the modest, upright common people of his country whose true spirit he saw revealed at Sevastopol. With all his great heart he felt the injustice of the oppression of the masses. "I have had occasion to study this evil down to the smallest, dirty and horrible details. . . . The evil has developed beyond all bounds; its consequences are to be seen in the sufferings of scores of thousands of unfortunates and it threatens destruction to the country," wrote Tolstoy in one of his memoranda. "I have resolved," he concluded, "to oppose it to the best of my ability with pen, word and strength."



At about the same time he entered still another revealing phrase in his diary: "My aim is the good I can do by my writing."

There can be no doubt that his experiences in Sevastopol deeply affected all Tolstoy's literary work, that they helped him to draw the vivid battle scenes and the many portraits of Russian soldiers and officers contained in *War and Peace*. And it is interesting to note that in the things he wrote immediately after the Sevastopol Defence, he raised the question of emancipating the Russian muzhik, whose misfortunes and merits he well knew.

The days spent on the bastions of Sevastopol left so deep a mark on the writer that half a century later, when he was old and ill, he repeatedly cried out in his delirium:

"Sevastopol is in flames! . . ."

And Tolstoy's words: "This epic of Sevastopol, whose hero was the Russian people, will leave its deep impress on Russia for a long time to come" proved highly prophetic.

The poet Nekrasov also wrote inspired lines to the heroic defenders of Sevastopol. It was he, incidentally, who as editor of the *Sovremennik* was the first to recognize Leo Tolstoy's talent, and in his letters to the budding young writer he always encouraged the principal feature of his talent—his strict fidelity to truth. Later, in his critical reviews of contemporary Russian prose, Nekrasov wrote that "Volodya Kozeltsov is destined to live long in Russian literature, perhaps as long as the memory of the great, sad and stern days of the siege of Sevastopol."

It was with good reason that Nekrasov called those days days of greatness and misery. In his poem *The Pedlars* he wrote of the grief the war brought the plain folk: "The tsar's folly is the people's grief." But at the same time the poet appreciated the staunch patriotism of the people in its true historical light, and in the lines dedicated to the battle of Sevastopol he wrote that the thorny crown of the heroic people shone more brightly than the "victorious" crown of the tsar.

The glory of Sevastopol, the glory of those who despite the incompetence of the high command, the poor armaments and lack of munitions, stood fast on the city's bastions and held off the enemy for many long months, who courageously bore the privations and sacrificed their lives—not for the city, but for their country—has never faded. They gave their heart's blood for their country, and she repays them with grateful memory.

The Russian battle painter F. A. Rubo painted a huge panorama recording the exploits of the heroes of Sevastopol. To house it a special building was erected on the Historical Boulevard, not far from the spot where the young Tolstoy fought and wrote, and thousands of descendants of those heroes came to it to see the art monument to the defence of Sevastopol. During the second defence of Sevastopol the Nazis destroyed the Sevastopol Panorama, but Soviet sailors saved Rubo's canvas. The building has now been put up anew and the magnificent battle painting, restored by the best Soviet artists, is again on view to the public.



Russian writers have always been attracted to the theme of the heroic defence of Sevastopol, a theme highly patriotic in the popular sense. Second to Tolstoy's stories that theme found its worthiest expression in *The Defence of Sevastopol*, a novel in three volumes by Sergei Sergeyev-Tsensky, a contemporary of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Kuprin.

The son of a veteran of the first Sevastopol defence of 1854-1855, Sergeyev-Tsensky has been living in the Crimea, in the small coastal town of Alushta, for the past half a century. I have had occasion to visit him in his Alushta cottage, by far the larger half of which is given over to his library. Despite his advanced age, he is still vigorous and busy completing his voluminous epic, *The Transfiguration of Russia*.

From Alushta the writer used frequently to visit Sevastopol's former battle sites to recall them to life with the imaginative eye of an artist. In addition, he made a deep study of a mass of factual material. In recognition of the artistic and historical value of his book he was elected to the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

Like Tolstoy and Nekrasov, Sergeyev-Tsensky drew an historically correct picture of the people in his *The Defence of Sevastopol* as the decisive force of social development. He presented a broad picture of the battle of Sevastopol and the events connected with it, shifting the action from the soldiers in the trenches and dug-outs to the officers' messes, to the mansions of the local aristocracy, to the remote Russian country estates where a ferment of unrest was beginning among the serfs, to the long St. Petersburg highway along which the tsar's messengers galloped, to the chambers of the tsar, to the streets of the capital, to the camp of the enemy and back again to the Sevastopol dug-outs and the heroes of the defence.

As though alive, there rise before us, in battle and in their private life, Koshka, the fearless sailor famed among the people; Dasha, Sevastopol's first nurse; the figures of those who, as true sons of the people, always stood at their side—surgeon Pirogov, and Admirals Kornilov and Nakhimov, both warmly beloved by the sailors and soldiers.

The staunchness of the city's defenders, Sergeyev-Tsensky shows, was a conscious feat of mass heroism.



"Those exploits were performed by the entire people," he writes, "not by separate individuals. . . . Sevastopol with its many bastions was no more than a point . . . but what a point! Not a city, but the banner of Russia! And the immense historical importance of the unexampled defence of the city from the onslaught of nearly the whole of Europe, whether participating openly or secretly, was none other than that of defending Russia's banner."

Describing the last days of the city's defence, the author cites a characteristic statement that appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. Its correspondent wrote that Homer would have compared the Russian retreat with the retreat of a lion which, surrounded by hunters, withdraws step by step. Shaking his mane, he turns his proud head towards his enemies and then continues on his way, bleeding from the many wounds he has received, but still undaunted and unvanquished.

"Your *Sevastopol* is fighting at our side. It is defending Sevastopol." Such was the tribute paid to Sergeyev-Tsensky by the defenders of Sevastopol in the Second World War.

The second Sevastopol defence began in the summer of 1941 when the Nazi invaders reached the walls of the hero-city. For 250 days they stood outside those walls, unable to make another step forward. It was not concrete fortifications, not anti-tank ditches or obstacles, but the courage and valour of Soviet soldiers and officers that held off the enemy for 250 days, that bound fast scores of divisions and thereby facilitated successful defence on other sectors of the huge front.

The whole country, the entire people helped Sevastopol. All its defenders, from the enlisted men to the highest commander had but one thought: to keep the enemy out of the city. Realization of their duty to their country inspired the Sevastopol defenders to deeds of valour that added fresh glory to that illustrious city.

Here, on the parched, red-brown heights of that same Duvankoi mentioned by Leo Tolstoy—today this village is called Verkhne-Sadovoye (Upper Gardens), for it is surrounded by rich collective-farm orchards—five Sevastopol sailors under the command of political officer Filchenko strung hand grenades round their waists at a crucial moment and flung themselves under the approaching enemy tanks. Those tanks that were not destroyed turned and fled. Only a few kilometres from here is the dug-out of machine-gunner Kalyuzhny who vowed to die rather than retreat—and did not retreat.

There were many such valiant deeds performed on the frontlines of Sevastopol—so many, that again they were no longer individual deeds of heroism, but the heroic exploit of the entire people.

The first to chronicle this heroic defence were the war correspondents who took immediate part in it—Alexandr Khamadan, Yevgeni Petrov and many others, whose dispatches and sketches were published in newspapers and magazines.

The sailors, the women of Sevastopol who helped the front by their work in the hospitals or simply by cooking and washing for the men, the engineers who built the city's fortifications are all poetically drawn in the stories of Pyotr Gavrilov, an officer of the Black Sea Fleet. Pyotr Sazhin, another veteran of the defence and also a naval officer, published a

book of short stories entitled *The Shield of Sevastopol*. All these stories were written about real people and many of them give their real names.

Best known of this series are the naval stories of Leonid Sobolev. They were first published in the frontline press during the war, but have since been repeatedly reprinted in book form under the title *Sailor Soul*, after a term current among sailors.

"'Sailor soul,'" writes Sobolev in his preface to the book, "is a term standing for firm resolution, resourcefulness, stout valour and indomitable steadfastness. . . . 'Sailor soul' stands for sincere friendship in battle. . . . 'Sailor soul' stands for deep love of life. The coward does not fight for his life; he only safeguards it. The coward is always passive; it is precisely inaction that costs him his miserable, unwanted life. The brave man, on the contrary, loves life passionately and actively. He fights for it with all his courage. . . . 'Sailor soul' stands for the will to victory."

These words were penned by the author as the conclusion to which the many encounters and exploits he describes led him. His stories carry still another title: "Frontline Notes." They are indeed in the nature of notes hurriedly jotted down on the pages of a correspondent's notebook, and perhaps that is why they still retain a fresh frontline atmosphere.

The people we meet in them are very different from each other but they are all united by their will to victory, by their loyalty to the appeals of the people to hold Sevastopol until the last possible moment. There is the unknown sailor who rushes forward to repulse a sudden enemy attack. All that was learned about him was that he was called Fedya, and since he had a pistol in his hand the men remembered him as "Fedya with the pistol." There is the captain of a cutter who replaces a slain tank commander and whose bravery amazes even old veterans. There are the scouts who seize an enemy trench-mortar and fire it until their own forces come up, although one of them, the Ukrainian, Kolesnik, is wounded in the leg, and the other, the Armenian, Hastiyan, has had his hand blown off. Wounded and bleeding, the men fought on. . . .

Particularly popular is the story "Stand Fast." It is based on an actual incident. To escape an enemy vessel, a submarine on duty in the Black Sea was forced to submerge. The captain resolved to keep it under water at all costs. But little by little, the crew grew faint from lack of air. Only one warrant officer, by a superhuman effort of will, retained consciousness and remained at his post until nightfall, when he brought the vessel to the surface. Thanks to his grit the vessel and the lives of the crew were saved.

"Stand fast for victory"—that was the motto of the defenders of Sevastopol.

After the war many participants and eye-witnesses published their memoirs. The best-written of these and the richest in vivid facts are *Motorship "Kakhetia"* by Olga Djigurda and *Sevastopol's Exploit* by B. Borisov.

Olga Djigurda served as a doctor in a hospital ship and made many journeys from the Caucasian coast to the fiery bays of Sevastopol to evacuate wounded soldiers. Her stirring book tells about the modest personnel of the floating hospital and the courage and nobility of spirit they showed under enemy fire and amidst constant danger.

As secretary of the Sevastopol Party Committee during the war, B. Borisov organized the city's life and provided aid for the front, which was so near that there was practically no difference between the advanced

positions and the so-called rear. The factories producing mines and hand grenades were transferred to the Sevastopol quarries. Women replaced the men who had gone out to battle. In the underground galleries near-by schools and kindergartens carried on their work. Heroism was indeed a mass quality here.

To the above documentary books may be added the latest book by Ivan Kozlov, author of *In the Crimean Underground*. Kozlov is an old-time Communist who was active in the Sevastopol underground during the Revolution. Now he has written a documentary narrative entitled *In the City of Russian Glory*, describing the patriotic resistance of the Sevastopolites during the city's temporary occupation by the enemy. This movement was headed by a sailor named Vasili Revyakin. Today the street where stands the vine-trellised house in which the members of the underground organization used to meet, where they listened to radio broadcasts from Moscow and where they issued a newspaper, bears his name.

Although but a short space of time has passed since the second heroic defence of Sevastopol, novels about it have also appeared. And reflected in these books, written by authors from various republics, is that friendship of the peoples which has become a characteristic feature of Soviet society. This is to be seen in *Sevastopol* by the Ukrainian writer Dmitri Tkach, in *Black Sea Sailors* by his countryman Vasili Kucher and in a two-volume novel by the Azerbaijan writer Abulhasan, revealingly entitled *Bastions of Friendship*.

Abulhasan is himself a veteran of the defence of Sevastopol and he saw with his own eyes how Russian and Ukrainian, Georgian, Kazakh and Azerbaijan soldiers bravely faced the dangers of battle together. His novel centres about the fate of an infantry company made up of men of different peacetime professions and different ages and coming from different places. Aliyev is a weaver from Baku; Naibov a collective-farm tractor driver; Sergei Pavlov a Sevastopolite. Drawn with particularly warm feeling is the patriotic Sevastopol family of Valentina Kholmogortseva.

The heroes of the novel have at times to deal with faint-hearted men and even with out-and-out traitors, but their staunchness and friendship carry them through all trials in triumph. That friendship thwarts all the desperate fascist attempts to incite national discord.

And that friendship is to be seen not only in that the Azerbaijanian Aliyev and the Russian girl Lida Kholmogortseva fall in love with each other, and not only in that soldiers of different nationalities help each other in difficult moments. This is but natural. That friendship is to be seen in the indissoluble patriotic unity of the men, in their love for their Soviet land and their determination to defend it.

I saw Sevastopol quite recently. I remember that one of the witnesses of the events of the past century related that after the first Sevastopol defence the city lay in ruins for more than fifty years. Today the city sparkles white in the splendour of its many tall new buildings. Trolley-buses cruise along its asphalted streets. And the surprising thing is that it is not these evidences of renascent life, but the sight of ruins that has become rare. In fact, there are hardly any ruins left.

Yes, Sevastopol stands mighty, calm, young and eternal. That is how it has met the centenary of its first defence and the tenth anniversary of its liberation in the Second World War.

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

CESAR M. ARCONADA

MIGUEL HERNANDEZ, A POET OF THE SPANISH PEOPLE

MARCH. The tragic Spanish spring of 1939. Rivers of blood stained the soil of Spain. Hangmen prowled about like voracious wolves. Franco and fascism, supported by world reaction, ascended the throne of tyranny.

And, plodding along wearily, over secret paths and mountain trails, across rocks and cliffs, through city slums and village backyards, the heroic Spanish fighters who for almost three years had held back the fascist onslaught sought shelter from the savage orgy of barbarism.

Among the wanderers in this tragic hour was one of Spain's finest poets—Miguel Hernandez, a soldier's knapsack on his back and the mud of the trenches clinging to his clothes.

Where should he go? How could he find the right road on so dark a night? At what door dare he knock? And, like Garcia Lorca three years earlier, the soldier poet decided to make his way to Madrid and from there to his native town of Orihuela, in the sunny east.

In Orihuela, Hernandez was betrayed, as Garcia Lorca had been before him. He managed to get away, however, and, crossing Spain on foot from east to west, he arrived in Portugal. There he fell into the clutches of the local police and was turned over to the "fraternal" Franco police. Then began a path of torment from one prison to another, until he finally landed in Madrid again. In Madrid he was released, by some error, no doubt. Once again the terrible question faced him—where should he go? At what door could the homeless wanderer just out of prison knock?

During the war the embassies of the capitalist countries had served as luxurious hotels, so to speak, which gave asylum to all reactionaries who asked for it. So great was their hospitality, in fact, that they leased entire buildings, hung out foreign flags, and filled them up with "welcome guests" whom they later arranged to get out of the country.

Miguel Hernandez decided to seek asylum in the Chilean embassy, probably with his old friendship with Pablo Neruda in mind. He knocked at the door. It opened only to be slammed in his face. "Begone," he was told, as if he were an importunate beggar. Several days later the police seized him, this time never to let him go again.

More prisons, more torture-chambers. A death sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Cruelty, maltreatment, starvation . . . until he was

done to death. "I do not want to lie where they will bury me," he wrote in a poem a few years before his death, his thoughts in the sunny olive groves of his native province. But he was buried in the prison graveyard under a tombstone of deliberate silence. This was in 1942. It was March again. The poet was thirty-two years old. . . .

In olden times when a tyrant vanquished a popular hero he not only cut off his head and stuck it on a picket for all to see but also razed his house to the ground and sprinkled salt on the earth to make it barren. Franco, tyrant of today, Hitler's vassal yesterday, also sprinkled salt on the soil of Spanish culture, with the wild cry "Death to reason!" In vain! The earth has not become sterile. On the contrary, it is giving birth to legions of popular heroes, to heroes of freedom.

Barbarism and hatred of reason are inherent characteristics of the Spanish fascists. Despite all their savagery, however,—and how well we know that savagery—they have been unable to sterilize Spain's great national culture, the culture of the Spanish people, ancient, rich and influential. Spanish culture is being defended, popularized and continued today by patriots who find thousands of ways to evade the censorship, to break chains and to drown the hypocritical songs of Franco's ideological sirens—by the revolutionary students who initiated the Barcelona strikes in 1951 and who dare to show films like *Potemkin* and *October* in the University of Madrid, by the intellectuals who are fighting against Franco, their eyes turned to all that is progressive and advanced, the Soviet Union especially, with an interest that is all the greater for the deep gloom in which they have been living, by young poets who, publicly repudiating Franco's official laureates and "art for art's sake" aesthetes, call for an art that carries a social message and serves the people, by cinema workers who take advantage of every legal opportunity to produce films that rouse patriotic feelings and evoke hatred against those who are bartering away their country's interests.

In the very heart of Spain, a new, young, anti-Franco intelligentsia is growing—the hope of tomorrow and already the bulwark of peace, independence, freedom and culture today. Inscribed on one of its banners is the name of Miguel Hernandez. The poet's voice rings out wherever the battle rages. The youth of Spain see in him not only a distinguished poet whose work is an inalienable part of the cultural treasure of the Spanish people; they also honour him as a fighter surrounded by a halo of courage for, doomed to a slow death in prison, his indomitable spirit remained free and unbroken.

The tombstone of silence under which Franco's hangmen hoped to conceal the traces of their crime and to bury the progressive work of a great poet has crumbled into dust despite their intrigues. A song that lives in the people cannot be stifled. How true are Neruda's lines to Hernandez:

*You are eternal,
For you are Spain,
You and her people are one.*

The Nuestro Tiempo Publishing House in Mexico recently issued a booklet which contains an appeal to progressive Spanish intellectuals urging them to take inspiration from Gorky in their literary and artistic endeavours, to follow the path of Miguel Hernandez "who dedicated his

life and work to the people's invincible struggle for a better life in a Spanish Spain."

How short was the creative life of Miguel Hernandez—no longer than a song!... "I was born to sing like a bird!" Yet in that brief song there is a wealth of modulation, feeling, melody, thought; it is a whole life, and a complicated one.

Hernandez was born in 1910, in Orihuela, a small provincial town with orchards, palm trees and many churches. His father was a shepherd and he himself herded goats until the age of twenty. It is amazing how thoroughly this self-educated goat-herd absorbed Spanish classical poetry. At a time when form was disintegrating, when decadent writers were breaking with all canons and rules, Miguel Hernandez was an unsurpassed master of classical form. He returned to the purest classicism, a worthy heir of Lope de Vega, Calderon, Gongora, Garcilaso. . . .

In 1933 Hernandez left his native town to go to Madrid. Rugged, powerful, stern, a determined yet bewildered look in his eyes, reticent and impassioned at the same time—that was the Hernandez we literary circles came to know in those days. One was immediately struck by his inaptitude for city life and by his sadness.

*I grew tall looking up to the trees
And strong living high in the hills,
But here, in the life that one sees,
The strength and the life in me stills.*

*What staircase can vie with cascade?
Can our peaks be dwarfed by their towers?
'Tis a hollow exchange I have made
For my mountains and rivers and flowers!*

Those were the anxious years of the republic that had been founded in 1931. On the one hand, seething political activity and the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. On the other, the pernicious influence of reactionary ideologists like Ortega y Gasset, who, emphasizing the conventionalism and rhetorics of the classics, distorting them and deliberately ignoring their popular essence, tried to influence the literary youth to hold aloof from reality.

This baleful influence touched Hernandez too. It impeded his growth and hindered him from immediately finding his true path, the path of the people. His ties with the people, however, were never completely severed. Just as in later years his jailers were unable to silence his mighty voice, so were the decadents unable to warp his melodious poetical form.

In July 1936 the Spanish reactionaries, supported by foreign fascism and secretly abetted by the so-called democratic powers, raised a rebellion against the republic. The people rose up in defence of the republic. This moment was a decisive one for Miguel Hernandez. On the one hand, the antagonism between town and country ceased to loom so large in his eyes. On the other hand, the reality around him prevailed over his interest in the past and put an end to his exclusive concern with mere form, with the rhetorical exercises he had been taught to see in the classics. He himself said "it was the traitors, by their treason on that fiery eighteenth of

July, who impelled me to turn my poetry into a militant weapon." Thus, the poet's hatred of the enemies of the people fused him with the people.

Only realization of the epic grandeur of an embattled people can provide insight into Miguel Hernandez's sudden change. Into the perfect form of his verses was poured the anxiety of a heart beating in unison with the heart of the people. He sang of the people, of the fight for liberation, of the youth. His poetry had the ring of metal, the resonance of a bell. Perfect classical form was now combined with the romantic fervour of patriotic odes and the imagery of modern poetry. The poet had become the champion of the people:

*Men, worlds, nations!
Listen to one whose blood flows from him.
Let my grief-laden heart-beats
Find an answering beat in your hearts;
For I sing with my soul held in my outstretched hands.*

*Nations, men, worlds, this I tell you:
The youth of Spain come from the trenches invincible
Invincible as the seed that is sown.
Theirs is a soul in which the banners wave,
A soul that can never be brought to its knees.*

The Winds is the title Hernandez gave to his collection of war poems; his poems are indeed like the wind—sonorous and swift, clamorous and full of hope, an inspiration to heroism and a clarion call to battle. And the wind of the people enfolded the poet in a paternal embrace.

With moral integrity worthy of the heroes of Calderon or Lope de Vega, Miguel Hernandez became a soldier among soldiers during the war, a frontline soldier with a rifle in hand. He was out of the trenches for only a few months when he attended a drama festival in the Soviet Union. He had written four short plays for frontline theatres and a drama entitled *El labrador de mas aire*, in which one can hear echoes of Lope de Vega's heroic tragedy *La Fuenteovejuna*:

*When thoughts of tyranny fill my mind
A strange stirring comes to my arms,
A stirring that I cannot quell . . .
The harder I try to control it
The harder my fists clench.*

Hernandez dreamed of touring the Spanish countryside with a theatre company after the war "showing plays that are Spanish life itself." He learned much about the theatre in the Soviet Union but he was unable to apply his knowledge. He returned to the trenches and after the trenches came prison.

One must be able to picture the black years of Franco terror to understand the tragedy of the great poet, dragged from one jail to another, beaten and tortured so that his powerful lungs, the lungs of a country-bred man, went to pieces. One must be able to understand what prison

meant to a man who loved the fields and open spaces as Hernandez did.

In the midst of his suffering the poet continued to write. These poems did not have the deep resonance of the ones written during the war but they, nevertheless, reveal an unconquerable spirit, a spirit that would not surrender even though doomed soon to disappear into eternal darkness. The poet sings jubilantly of his son and of his wife; he writes lyrical verses, condemns war, curses the torture-chambers "where freedom and light are shattered against rocks," but even in those torture-chambers he knows himself invincible.

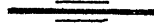
*In spite of the walls and warders
That I know are always there
In spite of the prisoners' medals—
Those heavy chains I wear—
I am proud and happy and free
Proud and happy and free
Because of love.*

*No walls can imprison Man
No fetters can hold me fast
This world of bolts and bars
Is less than nothing to me
For who can imprison a smile?
And who can build walls round a voice?*

No, nobody can build a wall around a voice if that voice is the voice of the people and has become a part of them. Miguel Hernandez was murdered but today his voice rings out in Spain with a vitality that frightens his murderers. In fact, his murderers have even had to permit the publication of his poems, abridged, of course.

"What a victory Miguel Hernandez has won over his murderers!" wrote the anti-Franco magazine *Cuadernos de cultura*, referring to the poet's present popularity.

Yes, indeed this is the victory of the immortality of the people, embodied in the poet.



FEUCHTWANGER ON ROUSSEAU

THE WORK of Lion Feuchtwanger holds a prominent place in progressive German literature. His artistic gifts, his humanism, his unrelenting struggle for the principles of democracy and peace, his hatred for fascism as the mortal foe of liberty and progress, have won Feuchtwanger a large and appreciative audience in all parts of the world.

Feuchtwanger's novels of the 'thirties, *Success* and *The Oppermanns*, were, together with such outstanding works of German literature as Willi Bredel's *Ordeal* and *The Seventh Cross* of Anna Seghers, significant contributions to the fight against fascism: they laid bare the true social essence of Nazism, showing that German fascism, like any other brand, leads to unbridled terror and to the unleashing of war.

Whether he wrote about burning issues of the day or whether his subject-matter was drawn from history, Feuchtwanger's work was always dedicated to the aim of exposing the forces that retard humanity's progress. The path by which he moved towards this aim, however, was by no means straightforward, and at times there was in his work much that was contradictory.

The ideological tendency of some of Feuchtwanger's books has been challenged by many progressive critics. Because of his idealist view of the historical process as a struggle of the "eternal" forces of good and evil, of "reason" and "unreason," his novels *Judaic War* and *The Jew of Rome*, though anti-fascist in their conception and historical in their subject-matter, failed either to give a real exposure of fascism or to present historical Judaea or Rome. Similarly unhistorical were *Jew Süß* and *The Ugly Duchess*, which were built on an abstract contrasting of "the hero" and "the mob" and on conflict between the "spiritual" and the "material."

It is not these books, however, that determine the main line of Feuchtwanger's work. Both in the days of Hitlerism and after its defeat, the writer fought persistently against the aggressive forces of international reaction and fascism. He put his signature to the Stockholm Appeal, and he has taken issue vigorously with the reactionary writers and philosophers who would thrust upon the world the fatalistic idea that another world war is inevitable. He has contributed actively to the literature of the German Democratic Republic, producing in these past years significant novels of the life of Goya and of Rousseau. In 1953 he was awarded by the government of the German Democratic Republic a National Prize, First Class.

In his recent work Feuchtwanger has increasingly occupied himself with the question of the place and role of the writer, the philosopher, the artist in the struggle of his people for freedom, social equality and democracy. This theme of service to the people is the central theme of the books about Goya and Rousseau.

The great democrat artist of Spain, whom Feuchtwanger portrays in the years of his artistic maturity, speaks with pride of his kinship with the common folk of his native land. In his pictures he creates profoundly typical figures of true representatives of the Spanish people—gallant, dauntless, noble-minded patriots. He is faithful and consistent in his political principles and sternly censures his famous French colleague, Louis David, who serves the upper classes with the same zeal as he once served the Convention and the Jacobins.

Another fighter against the forces and traditions of feudal oppression comes to life for us in *A Fanciful Wisdom, or the Death and Glory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, in which Feuchtwanger pictures the last days of this great philosopher of the Enlightenment and introduces the reader into the electric political atmosphere in France on the eve of the bourgeois revolution of 1789.

Emile has been burnt and its author sentenced by the Paris parliament to prison. Rousseau flees to the town of his birth; but, like the Kingdom of France, the Republic of Geneva has a warrant out for his arrest. After long and painful wanderings he returns to France, though the danger of imprisonment still threatens. It is following these events that the novel begins.

Feuchtwanger deliberately concentrates on Rousseau's last days, making no attempt to portray all the vicissitudes of his stormy, embattled life. He makes it his object to bring out the historical continuity in the rise and development of progressive, revolutionary forces. And in his book he shows the fight for a new social order, an order founded on liberty, equality and fraternity, being carried on after Rousseau's death by his followers and disciples—Robespierre, Saint-Just, and the two principal characters in the novel, Martin Catrou and Fernand de Brégy.

As the central problem of the book Feuchtwanger has taken the problem of power, that cardinal issue of all revolutions. Liberty—for the people; equality—before the people; fraternity—for the people. It is for these slogans of the Third Estate that the heroes of the novel fight. The author stresses that their lives are filled with significant content only because they are dedicated to the people's interests. Rousseau was a champion of the undivided and inalienable sovereignty of the people. Whatever the form of the government, he maintained, it is the mandatory and servant of the people, and the people have the right to replace it at any time. For this purpose they are entitled to resort to violence, inasmuch as it is employed to uphold liberty. On the eve of the Revolution these ideas of Rousseau's became general; and the greatness of Rousseau, as Feuchtwanger demonstrates, lies in the fact that his revolutionary ideas inspired the people to battle for their rights.

In depicting Rousseau's relations with his patron, the Marquis de Girardin, Feuchtwanger endeavours to show that no halfway humanism of Rousseauistically-inclined feudalists could resolve the basic social contradictions, no reforms on the part of an "enlightened absolutism" could save the system as a whole. It was rotten; it had to be swept away. And there was one means to that end: violence. That means could be employed "only by those who suffered by this system. The big change could come only from below, only from the masses, from the people."

Service to the interests of the Third Estate—that is the cardinal, the decisive thing in Feuchtwanger's figures of Martin Catrou and Fernand

de Brégy. The difference between them is only this, that Martin is himself a man of the people, while Fernand comes to them at the end of a long and difficult road.

Fernand is the son of the Marquis de Girardin, the master of the Ermenonville estate, where the aged Jean-Jacques finds his last refuge. The young Count is upright and fearless, he is a seeker after truth and justice, and he finds them in the ideas of Rousseau. But an agonizing question torments him: How many Rousseaus are there—two or one? He knows the illustrious author of *Emile* and *The Social Contract*. But he also knows another Jean-Jacques—the husband of the silly and wanton Thérèse, a man so short-sighted in practical life, so easily gulled and deceived. Can't Rousseau see how impatiently Thérèse is waiting for his death that she may finally publish the cherished manuscripts he so carefully keeps locked up?

And now Rousseau is dead—dead by violence, the author gives us to understand. The hastily formed commission of enquiry pronounces that he died as the result of "an accident." But everyone in Ermenonville, both in the castle and in the neighbourhood, is sure that he was killed by Thérèse's lover, Nicolas Montretout.

The murderer has calculated, and rightly, that neither the Court, nor the royal police, nor the owner of Ermenonville will want the true circumstances of Rousseau's death made known. The Marquis will keep quiet to escape the reproaches of Rousseau's friends and admirers, and the authorities, pleased to be rid of a dangerous free-thinker, will most certainly keep out of the affair.

Rousseau's death works a crucial change in Fernand. Rousseau the man, with all his failings, has gone to his rest, but the great ideas of Rousseau live on, and the figure of Jean-Jacques loses its duality for Fernand. It becomes clear, definite, it summons him to action, to struggle, and Fernand leaves Ermenonville and goes to fight in the American War of Independence, which will lead, he believes, to the triumph of his teacher's ideas. So he evolves into a fighter against feudal and colonial oppression, a champion of freedom and equality for the entire Third Estate.

But it would not be true to say that no one demands to have the murderer brought to justice. There are men who do. True, many of them have never read Rousseau and have only a very hazy knowledge of his revolutionary ideas; but they knew well the man who would sit with them over a mug of wine of an evening, discoursing on the right of all men to be free, and who would, when the need arose, go to the Marquis and stand up for their interests. These are the peasants, the serfs of Ermenonville. Their voice, however, sincere though it is, is weak. And only one youth loudly and passionately denounces the "justice" of the royal courts. But he is no longer a peasant in the full sense of the term: his mother is not a serf, but a free woman who keeps a small shop in the village, and he himself hopes to be a lawyer one day.

Here begins the second thread of the story—the history of Martin Catrou, a man sprung of the peasantry and representing the interests of the petty bourgeoisie.

Martin knows none of Fernand's wavering uncertainty. At first he simply will not recognize Rousseau, seeing in him only a sorry, foolish dupe: but upon coming to know his works, he at once ardently embraces the revolutionary ideas of *The Social Contract*, at the acceptance of which

Fernand arrived after such a long and painful quest. Above all does *The Social Contract* win Martin's support by its affirmation of the people's sacred right to sovereignty. Martin shares from the first Rousseau's views on the necessity of revolutionary violence, and justifies its employment. Fernand, on the other hand, comes to accept these ideas only after having served in Washington's army and under the impact of the events of the French Revolution.

Fernand is the principal hero of the book; it is on his evolution towards the people that attention is centred. Of Martin we see less, he is not in the focus of the narrative, so to speak; yet never for a moment does the author leave us in any doubt as to which of the two men is of greater value to society. He repeatedly emphasizes Martin's superiority: Martin evinces a full and correct understanding of Rousseau, while the well-educated Fernand only responds much later to the key ideas of *The Social Contract*. In his character and personality too, Martin is Fernand's superior. Martin, the man from the heart of the masses, is a truly positive character. And this creation of a character who expresses the interests of the people—in this case, the interests of the most revolutionary section of the Third Estate—is something new for Feuchtwanger. It may be recalled that in *Jew Süss*, for example, the people were represented as an easily misled, easily excited, blind and unreasoning mob.

Feuchtwanger does not exclude from the new society men sprung from the old, doomed class. When he traces the road that brings Fernand to the people, it is like a call to upright men of all classes and conditions to rise in defence of the oppressed and struggling people, to wage the struggle by their side.

The Third Estate is represented in Feuchtwanger's book as an integral, undifferentiated whole, with the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie as its principal striking force. The writer does not depict the conflict of interests within the Third Estate and makes no mention even of "*Les Enragés*." But his portrayal of the rising bourgeois society is a critical one. Take these remarks that Fernand makes about America after the War of Independence: "A little more liberty had been gained, but of equality and fraternity there was nothing to be felt. . . . Actually, next to nothing had been won. The dissipation of the wastrel aristocracy had been superseded by bourgeois money-making and hypocrisy. That," Fernand concludes bitterly, "was how Jean-Jacques' dream was fulfilled in America."

A character who must be mentioned is Robinet, that double-dealing tax collector and army purveyor who traffics in the interests of his country and people. Predatory to the core, Robinet is interested only in profit, only in the pursuit of gain. This figure is so powerfully relevant because it damningly typifies the anti-national and anti-democratic policy of the bourgeoisie once the bourgeois revolution has been made.

In reproducing the personality of Rousseau, whom Engels called one of the few dialecticians of the 18th century, and presenting a picture of the people making their history, Feuchtwanger stigmatizes contemporary capitalist society, which has long since renounced all revolutionary traditions and set itself against the people. In our day, when the bourgeoisie has thrown the banner of bourgeois-democratic liberties overboard, when it has trampled in the mud the ideas of liberalism and the rights of man, Feuchtwanger's choosing as his subject the epoch of the French Revolution, its slogan of "liberty, equality and fraternity" and the ideas of Rousseau

rings out like a denunciation of the whole history of the bourgeoisie after its victory over the feudal order.

Unquestionable as are the merits of Feuchtwanger's book, some aspects of it appear to us arguable.

Feuchtwanger says much about the role of ideas in the struggle of the classes, about the honourable place of the philosopher and writer in that struggle; but the concrete historical, material origin of those ideas remains outside his field of vision. In his novel, Rousseau stands alone. He is contrasted to all the other personalities of the French Enlightenment, from Voltaire to Diderot; he refuses to talk on political subjects even to the young Robespierre. Actually speaking, he is divorced from the life of his country; his intercourse with the peasants of Ermenonville is depicted as an eccentricity, a fanciful whim of the world-renowned philosopher.

Nor is Feuchtwanger accurate when he represents the divergencies between Rousseau and the Encyclopaedists as differences of a personal order. Rousseau and the Encyclopaedists expressed the interests of different sections of the bourgeoisie. It is also pertinent to recall that Rousseau rejected the thesis that "opinions rule the world" and declared, approximating to the materialist conception of history, that opinions depend on social relations and are generated by them.

These are real flaws, although, we repeat, they are only individual flaws in a fine book. The author has created living human beings, whose actions and passions are not determined (as they were in his early historical novels) by the "eternal" conflict of the forces of good and evil, but by their attitude to the revolutionary struggle of the masses. He successfully reproduces the historical background, ably introduces fictitious characters into the narrative, and alternates personal episodes with monumental scenes in which the chief actor is the masses.

The novel is free of the annoying "period effects" resorted to by some authors by way of creating historical "atmosphere." It is free also of a thing one was apt to meet in Feuchtwanger's early books—a persistent stressing of some purely external characteristic (Berenice's walk in the *Judaic War*, the pendulous lips of the ugly duchess), which tended to interfere with depth of psychological characterization.

The book is a brilliant instance of Feuchtwanger's superb command of style, of his extraordinary gift for word-selection and rhythm. Each chapter is an artistically complete whole, not only in its matter, but in its rhythm also. Long periods are often succeeded at the close of a chapter by short hammer-blow sentences, always very meaningful, which in some cases completely alter the reader's previous expectations and give the story some quite new twist.

The book about Rousseau marks new heights of achievement in Feuchtwanger's work. In the mighty maturity of his talent, the seventy-year-old author, who has travelled such a long and complicated road, is rightly entitled to rank among the first of Germany's progressive writers, who are fighting for national independence, unity and democratic rights for the entire German people.

GREAT ANNIVERSARIES



MONTESQUIEU

(On the 200th anniversary of his death)

THE OUTSTANDING philosopher, scientist and writer Montesquieu entered the world of letters when the feudal system reigned supreme in France. But within that system the forces were already maturing that were destined to overthrow it. "The 17th century was drawing to its close, and through the deepening shadows of its evening shone a wonderful new century, the active and vigorous 18th century," wrote Alexandr Herzen of that age. "Already the peoples had looked at themselves, already Montesquieu was writing, and the air was heavy with the approaching storm. . . ."

Montesquieu's brilliantly witty *Persian Letters*, his famous political treatise *Spirit of Laws* struck the first blows at feudal despotism. Montesquieu was followed by others. The courageous struggle that Voltaire waged against the forces of the past, Diderot's titanic feat in compiling the Encyclopaedia, the inspired democratic teachings of Rousseau laid the ideological foundation for the Revolution of 1789 that liberated France from the chains of feudalism.

Montesquieu's life was not so stormy as that of his younger contemporary Voltaire. But Montesquieu was never a mere arm-chair scholar. As Herzen rightly called him he was a "man of life."

Charles de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu, came of an old feudal family that had joined the ranks of what was called the

"aristocracy of the long robe"—the judicial caste. These high-ranking judges were well-known for their independent attitude towards the monarchy and often became *irondeurs*, who were opposed to absolutism.

Young Montesquieu's education was very extensive for his time. He had an excellent knowledge of the ancient languages and of Greek and Roman literature. During his training for a legal career he acquired a profound knowledge of the law, going deeply into the involved semi-medieval legal system, striving to discover its meaning and the fundamental principles on which it was built.

On the death of his uncle in 1716, having inherited a large estate, the title of baron, and the office of a president of the *parlement* of Bordeaux, Montesquieu for some time carried out his official duties assiduously; but he soon realized that it was impossible to do anything real in defence of justice.

He therefore enlarged his field of studies to include science; besides studying law and history, he devoted himself enthusiastically to medicine, biology, botany, physics, and also began taking part in the work of the Bordeaux Academy. It was then that Montesquieu started the diary which was to serve later as a basis for his famous book *Persian Letters* (1721), castigating the morals of the French society of his day. Although the book was originally published anonymously, the name of its author was soon revealed and became famous.

Montesquieu's works on history and politics were of great importance to the age in which he lived. In his main work, *Reflections on the Causes of the Grandeur and the Decadence of the Romans* (1734), Montesquieu strove to explain the political development of the Roman Empire. The book is an apologia for Republican Rome. Montesquieu argued that the Roman Republicans were not only defenders of civil liberty, they had also been ready to make tremendous sacrifices for the glory and greatness of their state.

He severely censured the despotism of the emperors, whose thirst for military conquest played a fatal role in the destiny of the great city. It was despotism that ruined Rome.

The work of Montesquieu laid the foundations for that cult of Roman civic virtues which was shared by Voltaire, the playwright Marie-Joseph de Chénier, the artist Louis David, and the members of the Convention. The Roman love of freedom inspired them in their struggle against French despotism.

In 1748 Montesquieu produced his treatise *Spirit of Laws*, a work equal in importance to *The Social Contract* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In *Spirit of Laws* Montesquieu strongly criticized the old feudal system, setting against it his principles of political freedom. All his arguments were aimed at unmasking the *ancien régime* which, he knew, was sustained only by the peoples' fear of the tyranny. Montesquieu's shortcoming, a historical shortcoming, was that he remained a staunch supporter of constitutional monarchy. But although not accepting the republican forms of government, Montesquieu upheld the civil rights of man and his political freedom.

The book met with a lively response from the progressive elements in French society. During the two years, 1748-1750 it went through twenty-two editions. The old world was up in arms against it. It was placed on the index by the Pope.

Inspired with the idea of freedom, the political writings of Montesquieu still retain their vital meaning. The most interesting work for the modern reader, however, is his *Persian Letters*, a masterpiece of French 18th-century narrative prose.

Montesquieu, as author of *Persian Letters*, is an artist of a special kind. Of such artists Belinsky wrote: "Their work makes up that special sphere of art where imagination yields first place to the intellect." In *Persian Letters* the picturesque element serves only as a background to the author's philosophical and historical ideas. The imagery is merely an aid to understanding.

The book is written in lively epistolary form. Its heroes, the two Persians, Uzbek and Rica, are travelling in France. Another Persian, Rhedi, follows their example and sets off for Venice. The travellers exchange letters with one another, and also write home to their fellow countrymen. Thus the book is a collection of letters. These Persians differ in character, Uzbek has a philosophical, contemplative mind, Rica is flippant and derisive. The book parodies the style of oriental epistles, it is full of parables and details of Persian life which the author has drawn from various other writings.

But the heroes of the book are merely conventional, imaginary figures whom the author uses to voice his own views, to criticize feudal-absolutist France, and to compare it with Asiatic despotism. For all their philosophical refinement, Montesquieu's Persians regard France with the eyes of simpletons, who show naive surprise at the absurdity of the social relations revealed to them.

Their travels take place during the reign of that most typical representative of absolutism, Louis XIV. Montesquieu makes fun of the monarch himself, he laughs at the hypocrisy, base morals and arrogance of the French aristocracy, at their religious fanaticism and their persecution of those who think differently from themselves.

He exposes the tax-farmers who buy their position in society, he exposes the financial intrigues of the big merchants. Poets who write high-flown panegyrics and sickly idylls do not escape his sarcasm; he ridicules the scholasticism of the members of the Academy who try to squeeze the infinite richness and variety of life into the stale patterns of their conceptions.

Firmly renouncing the fanatical intolerance of the theologians, Montesquieu champions political freedom and the dignity of man. He defends man's right to enjoy himself, his earthy sensual interests.

At the same time, he points out that the interests of the individual must be closely bound with the interests of his fellows, with the interests of society.

It is this theme that he deals with in his famous story of the Troglodytes (letters XI-XIV), in which he puts forward his utopian conception of a just and reasonable social system.

His story tells of the destruction of a certain mythical tribe, the Troglodytes, who fall victim of their own egoism. They care only for themselves and ignore the needs of their fellows. Out of the whole tribe only two families survive, because they love virtue and know the meaning of justice. By working hard and helping each other they

manage to protect themselves from the rigours of nature and from their rapacious neighbours.

Montesquieu's philosophizing Persians notice contradictions in the social development of the European countries and comment on these contradictions in their letters. Rhedi writes from Venice that the inventions and discoveries of European scientists, far from furthering the happiness of the peoples, are used by their rulers to cause them fresh suffering.

"I have not been long in Europe," writes Rhedi, "Yet I have heard sensible people talk of the ravages of chemistry. It seems to be a fourth plague, which ruins men, destroying them one by one, but continually; while war, pestilence, and famine destroy them in the mass, but at intervals."

Rhedi has other misgivings. "I dread always lest they should at last discover some secret which will furnish them with a briefer method of destroying men, by killing them off wholesale in tribes and nations."

The cowardly Rhedi, terrified at such a prospect, decides that it would be better to renounce the achievements of science and return to the primitive life. The reasonable Uzbek does not agree with him, however. Expressing Montesquieu's own point of view, he explains to his friend the advantages of science and upholds the idea that the development of humanity is towards better things.

He writes: "You fear, you say, that some more dreadful method of destruction than that at present in use will be invented. No; if a fatal invention were to be brought out, it would soon be prohibited by the law of nations and suppressed by unanimous consent." Montesquieu had profound faith in human intelligence.

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* created a new genre in literature—the philosophical-satirical novel. It was this genre that Voltaire used in *Candide*, and Diderot in *The Nephew of Rameau*, both works of the same kind as *Persian Letters*.

The French Enlightenment of the 18th century united people of different political and philosophical opinions. They were drawn together by their hatred of obsolete feudal ideas and institutions that were damaging to the national interests of France and had, therefore, to be eliminated. These people's activities prepared the ideological ground for the French Revolution. "In 1789, the pupils of Montesquieu shook hands with the pupils of Rousseau and applauded the common people of Paris who were storming the Bastille," wrote Chernyshevsky.

The works of Montesquieu, philosopher and artist, have become an integral part of progressive French culture. Balzac and Stendhal, for all the difference in their aesthetic ideas, regarded *Persian Letters* as an outstanding example of the French national style, where a daring philosophical idea combined with merciless analysis are presented in an amusing and original form, and where serious criticism is followed by witty allusions and attacks. It is a style that has found successors among such dissimilar writers as Mérimée, France and Rolland.

Montesquieu's works soon gained recognition and fame in Russia. There the first translator of *Persian Letters* was Antioch Kantemir, an outstanding Russian writer of the 18th century.

Montesquieu was also mentioned by the revolutionary writer Radishchev in his poem *A History in Song*. Although he did not share Montesquieu's political views, Radishchev nevertheless felt a profound respect for the French philosopher, whom he referred to as "Montesquieu the glorious."

Pushkin considered Montesquieu one of the most distinguished men of France, a most worthy representative of that "witty and upstanding people." Belinsky remarked on the deep and subtle humour of *Persian Letters*. Herzen called Montesquieu a philosopher whose ideas were far in advance of his contemporaries.

In commemorating the anniversary of Montesquieu's death, Soviet people not only express their respect for the great national culture of the French people, they see in Montesquieu a living source of noble ideas, a defender of man's rights and freedom.

A. STEIN



PROFILES

BORIS GALANOV

BORIS POLEVOY

1

SOVIET literature has a definitely established tradition of featuring as its heroes not only fictitious characters but living people as well. This tradition came into being with Maxim Gorky's *Mother* and developed further in such works as D. Furmanov's *Chapayev*, N. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, A. Makarenko's *The Road to Life*, A. Fadeyev's *The Young Guard* and many other books written on the heels of actual events and reflecting momentous stages in the life of the Soviet people.

Boris Polevoy is an ardent and consistent adherent of this tradition. His heroes are rank-and-file Soviet people—fighters and creators. The very titles of his works—*The Story of a Real Man* (1946), *We Are Soviet People* (1948), *My Contemporaries* (1952) are an avowal of his main theme and aim, which is to give true-to-life character portrayals, to create artistic images of Soviet men and women.

A writer can achieve this by drawing his heroes as composite characters who possess the most typical traits observed by the writer in a number of people representing a given social type. But a writer can also find his hero "ready-made," as a prototype fully satisfying his artistic conception. This does not mean, however, that the writer's role in this case is limited to that of a photographer, a mere copyist, who has no need for artistic imagination, conjecture and inventiveness. No matter how significant the life-story of the man portrayed or how captivating his personality, artistic imagination is no less essential here than in drawing a composite character with no particular prototype to fall back on.

Nearly all of Polevoy's stories are based on authentic facts and biographies, whether his characters appear under their real or slightly changed names.

"There is no phantasy in this book"—Polevoy tells his readers in the foreword to *We Are Soviet People*, a collection of short stories, and these words may well serve as an epigraph to all his work.

In his war stories Polevoy skilfully avoids a camera-eye reproduction of war-time life. Carefully sifting his material, he selects only those observations which have a direct bearing on the essence of things, observations which reveal the fundamental laws of development, the very soul of the Soviet man. At the same time, Polevoy never fears to present the typical through the exceptional. There are not many people with Maresyev's life-

story, but the typical traits of the Soviet man—unflinching tenacity, staunchness, indomitable will, and heroism—find their supreme expression in the unusual circumstances of Maresyev's life and struggle.

2

Boris Polevoy (Kampov) was born in Moscow in 1908 into the family of a lawyer. Soon after, the family removed to the town of Kalinin (then Tver) where Polevoy's father found employment. In 1916, after his father's death, his mother, who was a doctor, went to work at a hospital serving the large textile mill owned by the merchants Morozov. Mother and son moved into a small house on the mill's premises.

A taste for literary work manifested itself in Polevoy at an early age. He began by writing a series of notes on school life which he submitted to the local newspaper *Tverskaya Pravda*. This connection with the newspaper proved to be a fruitful one. In later years, when Polevoy studied at an industrial trade school and worked as a technologist at the same textile mill, he devoted his entire summer holidays to newspaper work. One year, by special arrangement with the editors, he went to Selizhar district in the Tver region to work on timber felling and rafting with a view to covering that topic in a series of sketches. Another year, he spent his summer as a librarian in the backwoods village of Mikishino, sending a number of items to his paper on the new, Socialist attitudes to life and traits of character of its inhabitants.

The first book of sketches and articles by Boris Polevoy came out in 1927. That marked the beginning of his career as a professional journalist. Since then and up to the end of the Great Patriotic War he worked as a correspondent on a number of newspapers.

In 1939 Polevoy's short novel *The Hot Shop* appeared, first in the monthly *Oktjabr* and soon afterwards as a separate publication. The novel, though not a finished piece of literature, drew the immediate attention of both readers and critics for the freshness of the material and the importance of the questions raised. In it Polevoy tried to sum up in artistic images the everyday events of Kalinin factory life which he himself had witnessed and had written about in the local newspapers—the development of Socialist emulation, the mass movement for new initiative in industry, for the best utilization of machinery. After the late war this novel was published in nearly all the People's Democracies. "Full of inspiring examples" (to quote a Rumanian reader's letter to Polevoy), it has had a direct educative value there.

As a *Pravda* correspondent and political instructor in the Soviet Army, Polevoy travelled the hard but glorious road from Stalingrad to Berlin during the Great Patriotic War. He went to many sections of the vast front where the fate of the country was being decided and several times flew across the frontline to "partisan territory" in Smolensk region and Byelorussia.

A number of Polevoy's stories developed out of the sparse and of necessity hurried dispatches which he sent in those days to *Pravda*. Those dispatches together with a book of war-time sketches, *Stalingrad* (1943), and the diary of a war correspondent *From Belgorod to the Carpathians* (1945) still retain their significance. A truthful testimony of an eyewitness, they preserve the living spirit of those heroic days.

At the end of the war Boris Polevoy, still as *Pravda* correspondent, was present at the sessions of the international war tribunal in Nürnberg. He heard the cowardly, hypocritical speeches of the Nazi leaders, the forced admission of Hermann Goering that the Hitlerites failed to understand the character of Soviet people. And he felt an immediate urge to describe the feats of ordinary Soviet men and women. Polevoy tells this in the closing words to *The Story of a Real Man*, explaining the birth of his idea and revealing the book's inner message.

Polevoy first heard of Alexei Maresyev's strange "Odyssey" in 1943 on an airfield near Orel. With a slight change in name—Meresyev instead of Maresyev—he appears on the pages of the book as a living embodiment of the Soviet man's strength and love of freedom.

In spite of all the hardships that the hero suffered, his is essentially an optimistic image with an eager striving for victory and an ardent belief in success, and that explains his immense popularity.

One may even draw direct analogies between the book and reality, for the story of Meresyev has helped many a war invalid to find his place in the ranks of builders of a new life. Prokofi Nektov, who lost both legs in the late war, made a name for himself as the best combine operator at the Belozerskaya Machine and Tractor Station in the Chkalov region, and won the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. Very popular in Czechoslovakia is the "Czechoslovakian Meresyev"—Jaroslav Cermak—who with both hands amputated at the wrists became a noted tractor driver in his homeland.

Polevoy succeeded in conveying the atmosphere of Soviet life, with its fine spirit of comradeship, and deep concern for the fate of man.

Polevoy has called Meresyev a real man. But the definition fits a number of other characters in the book as well. Regimental Commissar Semyon Vorobyov, the inhabitants of the "underground" village who found Meresyev and shared their last crust of bread with him, Meresyev's companion in arms Andrei Degterenko, the airman, and the doctors and the nurses—these are one and all real people.

No doubt Meresyev's is an exceptional case and remarkable is the feat he accomplished, but all the same the man who accomplished it was an ordinary Soviet man, one among the many valorous defenders of the Soviet land.

Belinsky, who sharply criticized the system of education for being divorced from actual life, wrote that it was in the interests of society to teach the growing generation "energy of action." The critic's words come to mind in connection with *The Story of a Real Man*. Every page of the book teaches "energy of action"—courage, daring, staunchness. The impact of the book is in its artistic convincingness; it does not describe an abstract heroic character, an abstract "energy of action," but presents a typical character, and portrays the actions of a member of Socialist society.

The same is true of another book by Polevoy—a collection of short stories about Soviet men and women in the Great Patriotic War—*We Are Soviet People* which, though published two years later, forms a logical sequence to *The Story of a Real Man* in its idea and message.

"We are Soviet people"—that is the briefly formulated reason for the heroism of the infantry and artillery men, scouts and partisans, Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian collective farmers finding themselves temporarily under the heel of fascist invaders. Making this unparalleled heroism the main theme of his story, Polevoy succeeded in showing the endless variety of its manifestations: their indomitable will-power helps the machine-gunners Yurko Tarakul and Mikhail Nachinkin turn an ordinary Stalingrad dwelling-house into an impregnable fortress ("Tarakul's Redoubt"); an ordinary Soviet miner from Krivoy Rog, Olexi Kushchevoy, performs a deed of unparalleled courage ("The Night Before Christmas"); girl-prisoners who are forced to work for a rich German landlady learn the grim "science of hatred" steeling their spiritual forces ("Liberated"); Mikhail Sinitsky, a mere boy, displays man-like firmness of character in leaving school for the front ("Private of the Guards"); the lovely Maria Shevchuk, a field nurse, is so fearless under fire that she earns the love of the whole division ("Maria").

The action of the stories "A Compatriot" and "Pan Tyukhin and Pan Teleyev" takes place in the early days of the war. Panteleyev, pilot of a shot-down bomber and the war prisoners Pantyukhin, Gorelkin and others find themselves cut off from their own army by several thousand kilometres. But even there, on the enemy's territory, they refuse to acknowledge defeat and lay down their arms. Some of them remain in Poland, others at the risk of their lives make their way back to their Motherland through Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. But wherever they went, wherever the grim whims of war carried them, they always remained the bearers of the noble idea of the working people's international solidarity and active participants in the peoples' struggle against the Nazi invaders.

5

If one were to give the briefest possible characterization of Polevoy, to mention his main traits as a writer, one should say that first and foremost he is an artist who marches in step with the times, intensely responsive to everything new in the life of Soviet society. In this respect newspaper work proved to be an excellent training ground for him. It developed his keen eye and his sharp ear.

A journalist's habit of seeing everything for himself, of being on the spot wherever anything of interest is going on, gives the writer no peace. Still, Polevoy's travels at home and abroad, the great number of people he meets and talks to, as well as his extensive public activities (Polevoy is a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. and a member of the Soviet Peace Committee) provide him with a wealth of material for his literary work.

Polevoy has not altogether given up newspaper work in post-war years. He often writes articles on topical subjects of general interest. To some extent, though by no means in any direct way, these writings found their reflection in his latest book *My Contemporaries*. For over three years, while collecting material for this book, Polevoy kept thinking of our foreign friends who hopefully turn their gaze to the Soviet land, and remembered the words he so often heard abroad from people in all walks of life: "Novels and stories describing your reality are to us a manual of life, a source of staunchness and faith in victory, a weapon in struggle."

The collection of short stories entitled *My Contemporaries* is a sincere and inspired narrative about all that the writer had seen at the Volga-Don Canal construction-site, written on the heels of events as they were taking shape.

Not everything in the book is on the same literary level, but the life-like, collective portrayal of our contemporaries, the builders of Communism, determined its success.

For a long time the war theme had been a predominant one in Polevoy's writings, although never to the exclusion of others. His first novel *The Hot Shop* treated of Socialist labour heroism, another short novel *He Came Back*, published in 1949, dwelt on high production targets reached by a famous Moscow steel smelter. The same theme is the subject of the *My Contemporaries* collection.

In describing the biographies of his characters, Polevoy gives a detailed account of their war-time exploits. This is not a "literary device" but a deliberately chosen way of stressing the organic bond that exists between the exploits of the Soviet people in the field of constructive labour and their military feats. It was with thoughts of the morrow that the artilleryman Anatoli Usov and Private of the Guards Pavel Nedaikhleb went into battle. After the war both of them worked on the Volga-Don Canal: one operating a "walking excavator," the other as head of a fitters' team. Different were the people who came to the construction-site—veterans of war and those who had been mere school children in the war years—but all of them were impelled there by the noble urge for the new, all were equally eager to help their country in carrying out an important task in the building of Communism.

6

There is one peculiar quality about Polevoy's books. Their stories are not told even after the author has put down the last stop in the manuscript. Polevoy's characters, as they go on living beyond the pages of his books, supplement, as it were, the writer's narrative, painting his images in new shades of colour no less bright and wonderful than the ones originally observed by the writer.

Alexei Maresyev returned to the ranks despite his severe injuries, and till the end of the war shot down nine more enemy planes. But that is not all. He has now graduated from a Higher Party School and is continuing his studies at the Academy of Social Sciences. He and Polevoy were delegates together at the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw. Another of Polevoy's heroes, Captain Malik Gabdullin, Hero of the Soviet Union, whom the writer met in the war days in the Kalinin region woods has become a noted scholar—head of the Language and Literature Institute of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences. The Volkov brothers who deliberately burned their hands over a camp-fire to escape Nazi slavery are both working now—one as an agronomist, the other as a shift foreman at the Dnepropetrovsk Works. Ulyana Belogrud, a Poltava region peasant woman who had saved the tank brigade banner, won a medal after the war for her achievements in the beet-fields.

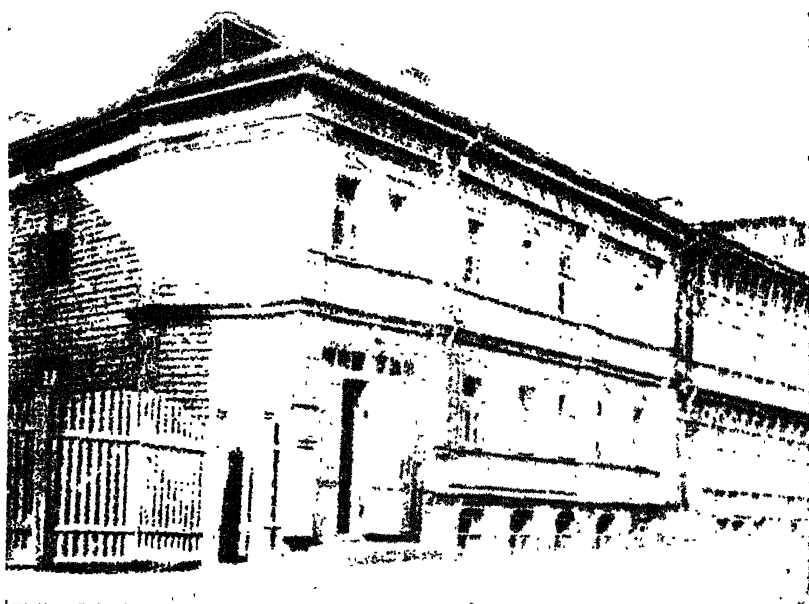
A great source of joy to Polevoy is his friendship with those whom he met on the war fronts, with whom he talked at a halt beside a camp-fire or in a corner of a trench during a lull in the fighting, with all those of whom he wrote in newspapers and books.

MISCELLANY

Where Gorky Lived and Worked

At the confluence of the Oka and the Volga lies the city of Gorky—formerly Nijni Novgorod

Many places in this old Russian city are associated with the great writer's life and work.



Kovalikhinskaya Street. Two-storey wooden house No. 39 with brick foundation and an outhouse in the courtyard. Built by V. V. Kashirin, a middle-class dyer of Nijni Novgorod.

On March 16, 1868, Alexei Peshkov—

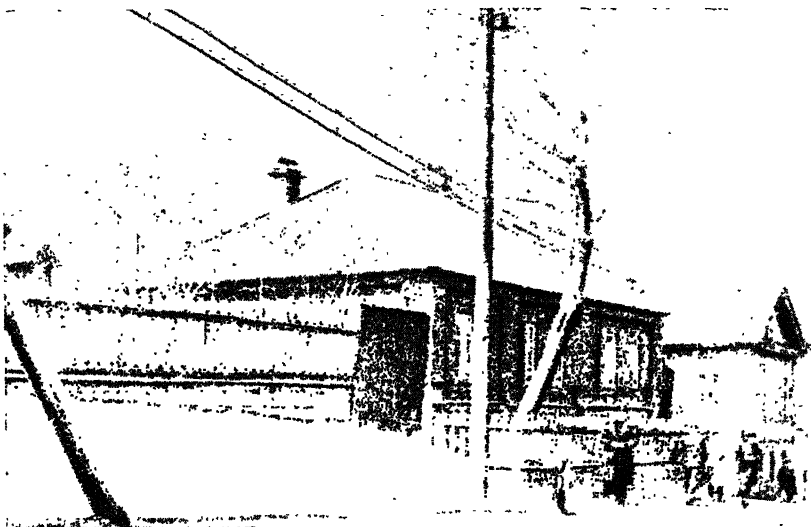
the future great writer Maxim Gorky—was born in the outhouse.

In Soviet times a memorial plaque was placed on "Kashirin's house." In the courtyard a children's library dedicated to Maxim Gorky has been built.

Today hundreds of thousands of people know the little house on Uspensky Street which Gorky describes in his book *Childhood*. It was here that old Kashirin moved and where in autumn, 1871, Alyosha Peshkov and his mother moved too, after the death of Alyosha's father.

Restoration work on this house was started in 1936 during Gorky's lifetime. He drew a plan of the rooms as they used to be arranged.

In 1938 a museum devoted to Gorky's childhood days was opened in this house. Since then half a million people, coming



from all parts of the Soviet Union, have visited this museum.

The house has been carefully restored to the condition it was in when the Kashirins lived there.

In the courtyard stands a cramped dying-shed; a gloomy kitchen with an overhanging sleeping bunk and a big Russian oven. Old Kashirin's room is

cold and stiff. Next to it, in Granny Akulina Ivanovna's room, we are in a different world, a cosy, warm world. Alyosha loved to visit this room and sit on the clothes chest, listening to his Granny's fairy-tales, to the rhythmical ticking of the big clock. Everything in this house looks exactly as it did eighty years ago.



On the first floor of No. 19 Martynovskaya Street in Nijni Novgorod, Gorky lived from 1902 to 1904.

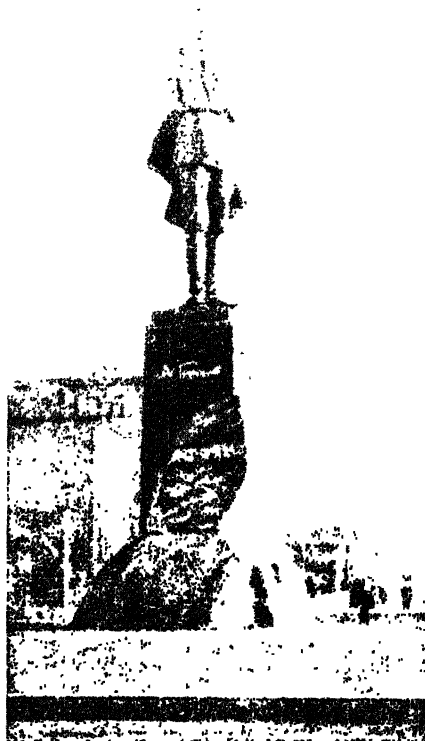
Here he wrote his play *Summer Residents*, and his philosophic poem *Man*. Here, too, he wrote his first draft of the

novel *Mother* based on the events of the 1902 revolutionary May Day demonstration by the Sormovo workers.

While he lived in this house, his last home in Nijni Novgorod, Gorky was visited by the leading Communist Y. M. Sverdlov, who was living and working in Nijni Novgorod at that time. Gorky's friends, the great singer Chaliapin, S. G. Skitalets the writer and A. B. Goldenveizer the pianist were among the many visitors Gorky received here.

In December 1904 Maxim Gorky gave up this flat and moved to Moscow. He was not to return to his birth-place until 1928.

Vera Mukhina's bronze shows Maxim Gorky at the time he lived in Nijni Novgorod as a passionate fighter advancing boldly to meet the struggle ahead in the name of the people's happiness. In 1952 this monument was unveiled in the Gorky Square in the city that now bears the great writer's name.



News from Soviet Publishers

Moscow

In 1954 The Young Guard Publishing House issued more than 15 million books.

In addition to books by young Russian writers, the publishing house, true to established tradition, published the first works of young writers of the sister republics, including *The Golden Medal*, a novel by the Armenian authoress A. Stepanyan, a tale by the Ukrainian writer Y. Mushketik *Semyon Paly*, a collection of stories by the Abkhazian writer A. Lasuriya *Morning in Keabrkhun*. This year the publication of new books by young authors will be further increased.

Among science fiction published last year we find L. Platov's *The Land of Seven Grasses*, describing the adventures of geologists and L. Kudashev's *The Ice Island* about utilizing atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

"The Library of Travel" included the following books: *Into Unexplored Regions* by S. Obruchev, *Sea Life* by V. Bogorov and a travel book by F. Grachyov entitled *Across Three Oceans*. A book by P. Luknitsky describes fascinating journeys along the Pamirs.¹

The scientific series "Our Country" provided young Soviet readers with *The Crimea* by V. Vetlina. *Turkmenistan* by P. Skosyrev and others.

Kiev

The Ukrainian State Publishing House is preparing for publication a translation into the Ukrainian language of two volumes of selected works by the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. The first

¹ See *In the Pamirs* by P. Luknitsky in our magazine No. 6, 1954.

volume, beginning with an essay on the life and work of the poet, includes "Ballads and Songs," "Love Sonnets," "Crimean Sonnets," some dramas and poems. The second volume will contain the well-known poem "Pan Tadeusz" translated by Maxim Rylsky

Alma-Ata

Nearly five and a half million books were issued by the Kazakh State Publishing House in 1954.

Soil Science by V. R. Williams, *Our Steppes, Before and Now* by V. V. Dokuchayev, fifteen textbooks for agricultural and animal husbandry schools, as well as sixty-three books and brochures describing experiences of innovators of agriculture have appeared in the Kazakh language.

Among the books issued by the Kazakh Publishing House of Fiction in the Kazakh language we find a collection of the works of Ukrainian writers and poets. Among them the selected works of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko and a collection of works of Kazakh writers and poets about the Ukraine. The novel by Pavel Kuznetsov, *A Man Finds His Fortune* (in Russian), tells us about the life of the Kazakh bard Jambul. The first volume of *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, *The First Clash* by André Stil, the first volume of *The*

School of Life by Sabit Mukanov and other works also appeared in Kazakh.

In 1954 the Kazakh State Publishing House of Fiction issued 180 books with a total print of about three and a half million copies.

The Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh S.S.R. has published *The Modern Kazakh Language*, prepared by the Institute of Language and Literature, in an edition of 10,000 copies. Problems of lexicology, phonetics, grammar and syntax of the Kazakh language are dealt with in this book.

Yerevan

Various books of the new "Popular Science Series" have appeared on the book-stalls of Yerevan. Among them are books dedicated to the works of modern Armenian writers and poets: E. Charents, D. Demirchyan, N. Zaryan, M. Araz, G. Saryan.

"We intend to continue the publication of the new series," stated E. Topchyan, Director of the M. Abegyan Institute of Literature of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. "The series will comprise the works of our students of literature and critics on Armenian writers of different periods, on the problems of the development of national prose, poetry, drama, on the history of literature and literature for children.

"The Defence of Sevastopol" Panorama

The Soviet Ukraine, literary organ of the Ukrainian Union of Soviet Writers, published an interview with P. P. Sokolov-Skalya, member of the Academy of Arts of the U.S.S.R., dealing with the restoration of "The Defence of Sevastopol" panorama. We publish this interview in a somewhat abridged form:

"Among the many artistic and historical monuments in the Soviet country an outstanding place is held by the panorama 'The Defence of Sevastopol,' describing the heroic deeds of the Russian Army and Navy in their struggle against the foreign invaders in 1854-1855.

"The idea to perpetuate this glorious page of the history of our country by creating a panorama picturing various episodes of battles for the city first arose at the beginning of the 20th century when preparations for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the defence of Sevastopol were being made. This task was

entrusted to F. A. Rubo, professor of the Academy of Arts.

"In the autumn of 1904 an unusual railway train arrived in Sevastopol. A 14-metre long wooden shaft, about one metre thick, lay in railway wagons. A huge canvas was rolled around it. This was the artist's picture. Soon after that the installation of the canvas began in a specially erected building on the Historical Boulevard, which spreads over the site of the famous Fourth Bastion. Rubo was assisted by the artists M. Grekov and L. Avilov.

"The solemn unveiling of 'The Defence of Sevastopol' panorama took place on the 15th of May, 1905.

"The panorama was formed of a canvas 115 metres in length and 14 metres high. It consisted of two parts: the foreground, where all objects are represented by natural size dummies and the picture proper.

"The transition from the foreground

to the picture proper was so imperceptible that the onlookers received the impression of complete unity of composition. After entering the building of the panorama and reaching the observation platform the onlooker felt as if he were present at the Malakhov Hill during the height of battle, together with the defenders of the fortress, and saw spreading before him not only the scene of the attack on the bastion but the entire besieged city: the Southern and Northern bays, the Grafskaya pier, the Primorsky Boulevard, the Konstantin and Mikhail Ravelins.

"Sevastopol in the midst of battle was surrounded with the smoke of fires and by chains of masts of ships scuttled to prevent the enemy fleet from approaching the bay.

"The water-side batteries kept up steady fire against the enemy troops.

"The panorama acquired special prominence after the Great October Socialist Revolution. The number of visitors increased every year. In 1938 their number exceeded 300,000. Besides the inhabitants of Sevastopol the panorama was constantly visited by holiday makers from the Crimean health resorts and by foreign tourists.

"During the heroic defence of Sevastopol in the Great Patriotic War the Soviet command made every effort to save this monument of Russian art from enemy fire and destruction. Military objects and anti-aircraft guns were kept away from it and special guards were assigned to protect the building.

"However, on June 25, 1942, Nazi bombers made a mass attack on the Historical Boulevard and subjected the panorama to barbarous bombing. The building was set on fire. The flames threatened the picture. Marines being alerted about the incident, rushed into the blazing building and led by the artist Anapolsky, who served in the fleet, cut the canvas into parts with their daggers and bayonets and extracted it quickly from the fire.

"The carefully packed pieces of singed canvas, saved by the courageous Black Sea sailors, were brought to Kamysch Bay under fire and bombing and later carried out of the city on a warship.

"An inspection of the panorama revealed that it had been cut into 86 pieces of various shapes and sizes with unevenly torn and singed edges, that it was damaged in six thousand places by shell-splinters and fire. Out of the 1610 square metres of painted surface, over a quarter had been lost. The part of the panorama depicting the sky had perished altogether as well as the foreground.

"Shortly after the Great Patriotic War the Soviet Government decided to restore the panorama.

"By 1951 the restoration workshops of the Tretyakov Gallery, headed by the artist P. Korin, had carried out enormous work on the restoration of the surviving parts of the panorama.

"By government decision a group of artists headed by V. N. Yakovlev, People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. and member of the Academy of Arts of the U.S.S.R., was formed.

"After the death of V. N. Yakovlev in July 1953 I was entrusted with the supervision of this group.

"We were faced with the task of restoring the work of F. A. Rubo on a huge suspended canvas, basing our efforts on the remnants of the original. When part of this work had been completed, we arranged the foreground picturing the fortifications and elements of contemporary military conditions between the observation platform and the canvas of the panorama.

"The restoration of 'The Defence of Sevastopol' panorama may be regarded as the first great labour of Soviet artists in this branch of representational art. This work will be the first in a series of monumental panoramas reflecting outstanding events in Soviet life and the glorious pages of the heroic past of our great country."

Exhibition of Works by Transcaucasian Artists

An exhibition of paintings, sculpture and drawings by Transcaucasian artists was held last year in Baku and later in Moscow.

Some 300 artists of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia were represented. Among the painters were: M. Saryan, A. Kodzoyan, G. Gyurdgyan, A. Kuta-

teladze; the sculptors included A. Sarkisyan and P. Sabsai.

In addition to works by established artists, the exhibition included examples of the work of many young artists, who only recently completed their education in the art schools of Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, Yerevan and elsewhere.

The Kazakh State Conservatoire

Before the Revolution Kazakhstan had no musical institutions or theatres. The Akyns—people's bards and poet-improvisators, were the only vehicle of national musical culture.

After the Revolution the musical life of Kazakhstan began to develop rapidly. The Kazakh Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet was founded. The Philharmonic Musical Society was opened



and an orchestra of national instruments and the Kazakh chorus and symphonic orchestra were organized. A department of the history of art was created within the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh Republic, and ten years ago the first Kazakh State Conservatoire was opened.

Several scores of musicians receive higher education and annually a number of instrumentalists, vocalists, conductors, composers and theoreticians graduate at the Conservatoire. Last year about three hundred students were admitted to the Conservatoire, a number considerably exceeding that of any previous year.

One of the pupils of the Conservatoire, Fatima Balgayeva, who won a prize at the International Youth and Students Competition in Berlin in 1950, mastered the art of playing the kabyz. This ancient

two-string instrument consists of a hollow wooden sphere covered with camel's skin. It is held like a 'cello. The strings are of horsehair. The kabyz has a bird-like tone. At present Balgayeva holds a teaching post at the Conservatoire. The singers Yermek Serkebayev and Rosa Baglanova are also former students of the Conservatoire who won prizes at international youth and students' competitions.

Stalin Prize winner Kulyash Bayseitova and People's Artiste Dosymjanov are singers who enjoy wide popularity in the U.S.S.R. The names of the composers Zhubanov and Tulebayev are well-known outside Kazakhstan. Their works include opera and symphonic music. Tulebayev's opera *Byrzhan and Sara* won him the award of a Stalin Prize.

New Libraries

Eight years ago there were 337 district and village libraries in Uzbekistan; now there are almost six times that number.

At the end of 1954, 132 new libraries,

including 113 village libraries, were opened in the Uzbek S.S.R.

These libraries are well stocked. In 1953 alone they acquired as many as 7,748,800 books.



Monument to Nikolai Ostrovsky

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Soviet writer Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904-1936), author of the novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*, a tombstone was erected on his grave in Moscow. The monument, illustrated here, is the work of V. Tsigal.

SOVIET LITERATURE

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THE INTERNATIONAL STALIN PEACE PRIZE AWARDS

The Committee for the Adjudication of the International Stalin Prizes For the Promotion of Peace Among Nations met in Moscow on December 11, 14 and 18, 1954, under the chairmanship of D. V. Skobeltsyn, Member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

The Committee examined proposals concerning the International Stalin Prize awards for 1954 and adopted the following decision.

ON THE ADJUDICATION OF INTERNATIONAL STALIN PRIZES FOR THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AMONG NATIONS FOR 1954

*Decision of the Committee For the Adjudication of International Stalin Prizes
For the Promotion of Peace Among Nations, December 18, 1954*

The International Stalin Prizes For the Promotion of Peace Among Nations have been awarded to the following persons for outstanding services in the struggle to preserve and strengthen peace:

Denis Nowell PRITT, lawyer (England)

Alain Le LÉAP, General-Secretary of the French General Confederation of Labour (France)

Takin Kodo HMAING, writer (Burma)

Bertolt BRECHT, poet and dramatist (Germany)

Professor Felix IVERSEN, Helsinki University (Finland)

Professor André BONNARD, Lausanne University (Switzerland)

Professor Baldomero SANIN CANO, honorary Doctor of Edinburgh and Bogota Universities (Colombia)

Professor PRIJONO, Dean of the Faculty of Literature of the University of Indonesia, Djakarta (Indonesia)

Nicolás GUILLÉN, poet (Cuba)

Chairman of the Committee: D. V. SKOBELTSYN

Vice-Chairmen: KUO MO-JO (China)

LOUIS ARAGON (France)

Members:

ANNA SEGHERS (Germany), ANTONIO BANFI (Italy),
JOHN BERNAL (England), JAN DEMBOWSKI (Poland),
PABLO NERUDA (Chile), MIHAIL SADOVEANU (Rumania),
SAHIB SINGH SOKHEY (India), G. V. ALEXANDROV
(U.S.S.R.), A. A. FADEYEV (U.S.S.R.), I. G. EHREN-
BURG (U.S.S.R.).

December 18, 1954 Moscow

*D. V. SKOBELTSYN, Member of the
U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Chair-
man of the Committee on International
Stalin Prizes For the Promotion of Peace
Among Nations.*

OUTSTANDING FIGHTERS FOR PEACE

On the 75th anniversary of the birth of that great fighter for peace, J. V. Stalin, has been published a resolution conferring yet another list of International Stalin Prizes For the Promotion of Peace Among Nations. The Committee, which consists of representatives of the democratic public bodies of different countries, conferred prizes upon a new group of outstanding fighters for peace and friendship among nations.

Among the active fighters for peace who have been awarded the Prize is DENIS NOWELL PRITT, a prominent figure in the public life of England and President of the International Association of Democratic Jurists. D. N. Pritt has a wide reputation as an authority on jurisprudence. He was appointed a King's Counsel in 1927 and for many years has taken an active part in the political and public life of Britain. His services in exposing the guilt of the German war criminals are well-known, and his publicistic writings are acclaimed as the convincing testimony of an objective observer. It was in this spirit that a wide public received the famous pamphlets in which he threw light on the inner truth of events in Korea. The award of a Stalin Peace Prize to D. N. Pritt will evoke great satisfaction in wide circles of the British public.

Activities over a long period have earned the high honour of an International Stalin Peace Prize for a leader of the French labour movement, ALAIN LE LÉAP, General-Secretary of the French General Confederation of Labour. Le Léap is now in the third decade of a career devoted to protecting the interests of the working people. The struggle for the well-being of wage-earners led inevitably to his active participation in the struggle to promote peace and to end the menace of a new war and the burden of rearmament which bring nothing but deprivations to the working people. He has appealed unceasingly to the trade-union movement of his country for positive action against the preparations for a new war and was in the front ranks of the fighters against the war in Indo-China. Today he and other patriots of France fight against the London and Paris agreements which are direct threats to the national interests of the French people. The trade-union movement of France takes an important part in this patriotic fight of the people. The award of a Stalin Peace Prize to this patriot and active fighter for the interests of the working people gives his services international recognition in the eyes of his own people and all the peoples of the world.

A Stalin Peace Prize is awarded to a prominent figure in the public life of Burma and an outstanding representative of Burmese culture, TAKIN

KODO HMAING. This writer, historian, philosopher and veteran of the national liberation struggle of the Burmese people enjoys great respect in his country; people refer to him lovingly as the "Grand Old Man of Burma." During his long life he has written about a hundred plays and novels as well as poems and songs on which a whole generation of fighters for the national independence of Burma have been brought up. He also wrote a number of books on the history of his country, its culture and its literature, many of which are accepted as authoritative textbooks.

During the period of British rule in Burma, Hmaing stood at the head of the party of "Takins" who saw as their goal the liberation of the country from its foreign yoke. This party played at that time an important role in the political life of the country and gathered around itself all the national forces. After the Second World War Hmaing was prominent among the active fighters for peace in Asia and throughout the whole world. In May 1952, the first All-Burma Peace Congress chose him as president of the national committee of the congress. Under the leadership of that committee, there were gathered about a million signatures in Burma for the Five-Power Peace Pact appeal. Many times has Takin Kodo Hmaing raised his voice in protest against the war in Korea and against the infiltration of South-East Asia by American imperialism. This great writer of the Burmese people and patriarch of their struggle for national liberation symbolizes the highest aspirations of his fellow-countrymen.

Among those awarded the Stalin Peace Prizes is the leading German poet and playwright, who is well-known in Germany, BERTOLT BRECHT. Bertolt Brecht became a staunch fighter against militarism in the years immediately following the First World War. When the German people were under the yoke of Hitlerism, he wrote in exile several important works, including *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich*, which played a great role in the fight against fascism.

Bertolt Brecht lives in the German Democratic Republic and takes an active part in the building of the new life there. He is in the vanguard of the patriotic forces of the German people who are fighting for the peaceful reunification of their country, for peace and friendship between the German people and all other peoples and are fighting against the growing menace of German militarism.

The Committee made a similar award to the distinguished Finnish scientist and public figure, Professor FELIX IVERSEN. Campaigners for peace in Finland and other countries of Scandinavia recognize him as one of the most earnest and altruistic figures of the pacifist movement. Iversen's pacifist activities began in the 'twenties. The First World War and its aftermath were a decisive influence on the world-outlook of the young scientist, and he resolved to dedicate his life to the defence of peace. Since 1926 he has been the leader of the pacifist organization, the Finnish Peace Union, and since 1935 he has been chairman of the Peace Union of the Northern Countries, an association of Scandinavian pacifist organizations.

When the peace campaign developed after the Second World War, Felix Iversen joined it unhesitatingly. Speaking at the Finnish Peace Union Congress in 1949 he said: "The programme of the Peace Campaign is such that all real friends of peace can unreservedly approve of it." The Finnish Peace Union became a member-organization of the peace movement in

Finland, and Iversen was appointed vice-president of the latter organization. He launched an energetic campaign against armaments and against the rearming of Western Germany. The pledge of security for the Scandinavian peoples is, in Iversen's opinion, the fact that their countries do not enter into any aggressive pacts but follow a peace-loving policy.

Another recipient of the honour, Professor ANDRÉ BONNARD, is a leading Swiss authority on linguistics, and is well-known in Western Europe for his scientific and public activities. Although his academic interests are connected with the ancient world—for many years he has been a professor of Greek and Greek literature in Lausanne University—André Bonnard does not confine himself to the academic world but sees its ties with problems of the present day. For that reason it was natural that he did not stand aside when, following the Wrocław Cultural Congress in 1948, there began in all the countries of Europe a wide movement among intellectuals in defence of peace. He was the prime mover in the plan to unite all the peace-loving elements of Switzerland in one organization. Since 1949 Professor Bonnard has been chairman of the Peace Committee of Switzerland. Despite attacks upon him, Professor Bonnard, as a true scientist who makes the interests of the people his own, is in the vanguard of the progressive movement of today—the peace campaign.

The award of the Stalin Peace Prize to Professor BALDOMERO SANIN CANO, a well-known figure in the academic and political world of Colombia, will undoubtedly be greeted with great satisfaction in Latin America. In the eyes of the Latin-American peoples Professor Sanin Cano is a shining example of the humanism and liberalism to which he has remained faithful throughout his long life. His activities and knowledge are exceedingly diverse. He is author of many works on philology and an authority on the literatures of Europe. His academic services were rewarded by the conferment of honorary doctorates of Edinburgh and Bogota Universities. He is also a prominent member of the Liberal Party of Colombia and a diplomat who has held important governmental posts in his own country and abroad.

Since the beginning of the peace campaign in Colombia and in the whole of Latin America, Professor Sanin Cano has taken an active part in the movement, and he is at present honorary president of the Colombia Peace Council. Despite his advanced years he has not laid aside his powerful pen and he continues to appeal to his fellow-countrymen to fight against war propaganda and against the encroachments of American imperialism on the freedom and independence of Colombia and other Latin-American republics.

For the first time a representative of Indonesia has been given a Stalin Peace Prize. Professor PRIJONO is well-known in Indonesia as a distinguished figure in the country's cultural life and an active fighter for the preservation of peace in Asia and in the whole world. As well as being an authority on linguistics, Professor Prijono takes an active part in the public life of the country as vice-president of the Indonesian Peace Committee. As is well known the Indonesian movement for national independence and peace attained great force during recent years. The Indonesian people fight for the full liberation and independence of their country; they oppose the aggressive pacts into which American imperialists try to drag Indonesia and other countries of South-East Asia.

Among those awarded the Stalin Peace Prize is NICOLÁS GUILLÉN, Cuba's greatest poet and an outstanding public figure and journalist. Guillén's poetry is deeply national in its essence and enjoys a wide popularity not only in Cuba but throughout all the Latin-American countries. He has been translated into French, German, English, Portuguese and other languages, and many of his poems have been set to music. In 1952 Guillén published a volume, *The Dove of the Peoples*, an example of the kind of poetry that helps in the battle to secure peace and to end the oppression of the Latin-American peoples by American imperialism. Nicolás Guillén has toured all the Latin-American republics and also many European countries and everywhere he read poems of his that rally the fighters for independence, peace and democracy.

The peoples' campaign in the defence of peace grows wider and stronger in every country of the world. It produces more and more heroes whose noble work earns for them the recognition and love of wide masses of people. Our committee strives to give expression to this popular recognition of those who give all their strength, all their energy and talent, to the achievement of the highest aim of our time—the safeguarding of peaceful and friendly collaboration among all the nations of the world.

Pravda, Dec. 21, 1954

ISRAIL METTER

Comrades

Chapter One

1

MITYA woke early, and as usual lay drowsily waiting for the sun to reach the foot of his bed. On dull days the goats always wakened him by their quarrelling with the hens. Only a thin wooden partition separated the verandah where Mitya slept in summer from the shed which housed the two goats, mother and daughter, and the seven hens.

Still half asleep, Mitya watched the sunbeam, contentedly savouring the cosiness of bed and the pleasure of a long, fine day ahead. He began slowly turning over in his mind all the good things it would hold—and suddenly remembered that tomorrow he was leaving Lebedyan.

His mother came out to give the goats fresh water and let out the hens. As she passed Mitya's bed she stopped for a second, as she often did, to straighten the coat which lay on top of his quilt. Thinking him still asleep, she did not disturb him; ever since it had been decided that he was to go to Moscow, she had not asked him to do anything about the house or farmstead.

"Let him have a good time while he can," she said to herself. "He'll have plenty to do when he gets to the city."

The result was that he passed those last days in unaccustomed idleness. The school term had finished long ago, and whenever he thought of starting to do anything, he dropped it again with the recollection: what for? I'm going away.

Today was Sunday. He had arranged with the boys to go fishing in the Don at dawn, but now the sun was already high. They must have been under the willow-bushes with their rods for a long time. Vitka would be grousing as usual, saying they ought to throw further to the right. If they used worms, Vitka always insisted they ought to have a grain mash for ground-bait: if they used ground-bait, he said worms alone would do. He's made that way, contrary, Mitya reflected. I suppose that's why he stammers—because he's always arguing.

The sunshine touched the foot of the bed. Only five minutes had passed since he woke up, and he had time to think about everything. He never could understand why he sometimes thought so quickly and sometimes so slowly. There were days when so much would pass through his head while he walked from one telegraph post to another on the way to school that he could not understand how it happened, and others when he would find nothing to think about all the way from home to Tyapkin Hill—some silly thing or other would last him the whole walk.

All through breakfast his mother kept sighing and pouring more milk on to his porridge. She had already accustomed herself to the idea of his departure—at least, so she thought—and she went about the house quietly and sadly.

Mitya was not old enough fully to understand his mother or comfort her; he only felt vaguely that when she was present he ought not to be too boisterously delighted over going away.

"Can I help you with anything, Mum?" asked Mitya. "Maybe I should hoe the potatoes?"

"No, there's no need," sighed his mother.

"Well, I'll look over the cherries on the roof, then, some may be spoiling."

"No need. They won't spoil, they get plenty of air."

"All right, I'll bring you some water from the Don." At last he had found a job. His mother sighed again, but raised no further objection.

A big, fresh, jolly sun seemed poised over the distant grain elevator. A few wisps of cloud like tufts of straw still hung here and there, as though they had caught on something and been left when the sky was swept.

Apples and cherries were drying in frames on the cottage roofs. The round heads of sunflowers hung heavily on their rough stalks under the windows. On the outskirts of Lebedyan, life was half urban, half rural. In the evenings a herd of cows and goats meandered slowly down the broad grass-grown street, and housewives stood by the gates calling on varying notes: "Lyuba-Lyuba-Lyuba-Lyuba!" "Sonka! Sonka!" A cow would turn its heavy head towards a familiar voice and low impatiently as though protesting: "Why make all that noise? I heard you long ago. I'm coming," and separate itself leisurely from the herd. The goats ran to their mistresses with thin, eager bleating as much as to say: "Oh, how I've missed you!"—flattery which would win them a carrot or a piece of bread right there by the gate.

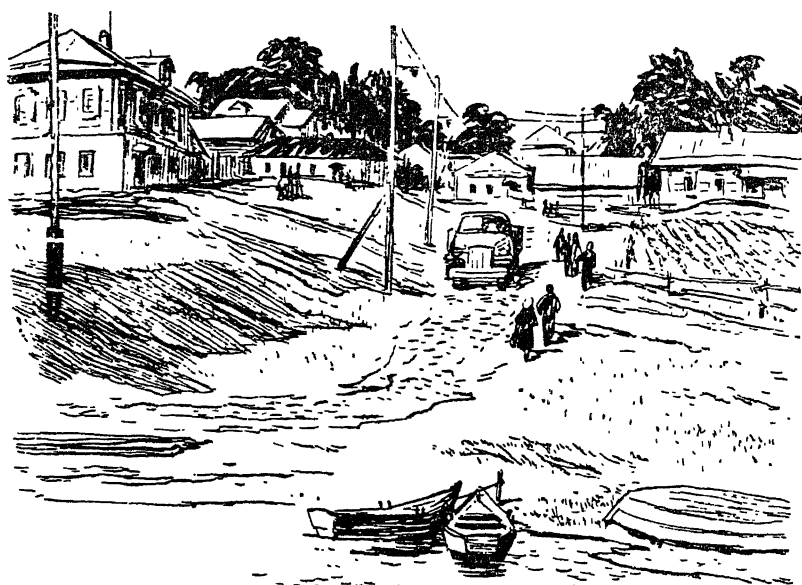
All this was in the evening. But now, in the early morning, people hurried along the street with portfolios in their hands, men went to the flour-mill and lorries rumbled past carrying bricks.

A month previously an old barracks near Mitya's house had been pulled down and now the bricks, white with age and lime, were being taken to the centre of the town where a big club was going up. On Sundays Lebedyan people went out to help with this work, and on Mondays the untidy piles of bricks would sink considerably, while the walls of the club were just a little higher.

Mitya decided to go for water to the willow-bushes where the boys usually went fishing.

The Don was very calm, and in the clear morning air every sound carried plainly from the opposite bank. Two women over there were rinsing clothes, their paddles slapping against a large stone; a boy was driving an obstinate cow into the water to wash its hind quarters; an old man was baling out a boat, its chain rattling as it swayed; and along the distant high-road, almost on the horizon, grain lorries from all over the district snorted on their way to the elevator.

It was a very familiar scene; but in these last days Mitya saw everything with new eyes. I shall be away, he thought, and things here will be going on just the same. . . . How queer. . . .



The river, the sky, the fields—they were so much a part of him that it was hard to imagine them existing without him. He wanted to take them with him, on that long journey into the unknown; then nothing could daunt him.

"Yah—sleepy head," said Vitka when Mitya joined the boys with his buckets. He sat down, his legs dangling over the bank. There were two other boys with Vitka—Misha Zaitsev, exuberant lad, the youngest of the gang, and Volodya Petrenko who had come home for the holidays from a vocational school in Ryazan.

"Oh Mitya, I had a bite just now, a perch, what a perch!—As big as that!" cried Misha Zaitsev, the words tumbling over each other. He was knee-deep in the water, his lips were blue with cold, little shivers ran over him, but his eyes sparkled with eagerness.

"He's a liar," said Vitka briefly. "Caught a root and calls it a perch. He'll not get anything, anyway; he's using only worms. He ought to use ground-bait too."

Vitka pulled out his hook, spat three times on the bait for luck and cast it again.

"Well—when are you going?" asked Volodya Petrenko.

"Tomorrow."

"Scared?"

"No, why? I'll get fixed up all right."

"Well, if you don't, come to Ryazan. We need people."

"Who wants your Ryazan, if he's in Moscow!" said Vitka, stammering a little.

"A bite! A bite!" cried Misha Zaitsev. "Honest it was, you should have felt how it tugged! Must have been a chub. . . ."

Nobody even turned round.

"Well, I look at it this way," said Volodya. "What's the difference

what town you live in? Ryazan'll do me all right for the present. When I finish school, then I'll go wherever I like."

"You will, will you?" remarked Vitka. "What about working? Wherever you go, there you'll stop."

"I'll just like it, wherever it is."

"What d'you mean, wherever it is? And if it is in Sakhalin?"

"Well, then I'll like Sakhalin."

Vitka, mouth open, searched for some fresh objection, but finding none, contented himself with saying: "Well, every man to his own taste."

"And what about you? I suppose you'll be just going on at school here this year?" asked Mitya smiling.

"I don't know."

"His mother does all his knowing for him," said Volodya. "She'll say, and that's how it'll be."

"Maybe yes, maybe no," Vitka flushed.

"Fancy sticking at home like you do," said Volodya. "I'd have cleared out long ago. I'd have gone to work. . . ."

"D'you think I sit at home doing nothing?" Vitka asked angrily. "I've got the whole house to look after."

Volodya laughed.

"The house! . . . That's no job!"

"What about you, then?"

"I'm different," said Volodya with dignity. "I'm training. When I finish vocational school then we'll see. But, at any rate, I shan't hang on to my mother's apron strings. A lad of fourteen wiping the baby's nose—! Look, you've a bite! Play it!"

"Shan't!"

"Fool!"

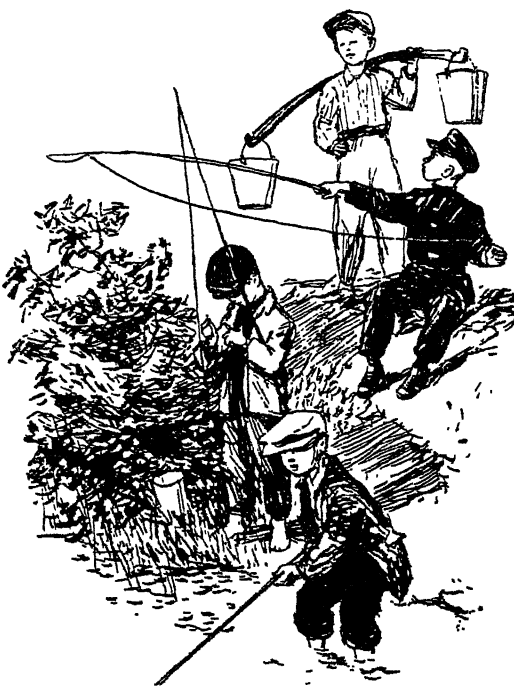
Vitka stood by the bushes biting his lip; he saw the float pulled under the water, but for sheer obstinacy did not jerk the rod.

"Why d'you want to start quarrelling when we're fishing?" said Misha Zaitsev, his teeth chattering.

"I'm not quarrelling," said Volodya pacifically.

"It's no business of mine. He's not a kid, he can decide for himself."

"And he will, too," said Misha. "Won't you, Vitka? There's Mitya going to Moscow, he's not scared. I wouldn't be scared either if only they'd let me go. What's there to be scared of? I'd go straight from the train to the director. . . ."



"What director?" smiled Mitya.

"Any director. I'd walk right up to him and say: 'I've had six forms at school, I know fractions and percentages. What work have you? I want to choose something.'"

"And the director'd sling you out on your ear!"

"Oh no, he wouldn't. He hasn't any right to. I'd have come on business. Just got to have spunk. And not take the first offer that comes along. Don't answer right off. Say—I'll think it over."

"Misha ought to become a director," said Volodya. "All Lebedyan boys 'ud be in clover."

"No-o-o," said Misha, taking it seriously. "That wouldn't suit me. You know the sort of job I'd like? I want to make things I can see. Like an engineer—build a house with doors, windows, everything in its place."

"Fine talk," remarked Vitka, "but you only just scraped through in arithmetic."

"Well, of course, I'd have to be trained," Misha admitted.

The sun was getting hot, and the boys gradually shed the clothes they had put on for their early fishing. The warmth made them peaceable and slowed their tongues.

Small fry awakened and bit; now and then a line flashed through the air with a gleaming gudgeon on the end. Sometimes a greedy perch, all prickly fins, was pulled out and then the boys crowded round the lucky fisherman to admire it.

"Gosh! Look at him!"

"Half a pound for sure!"

"More!"

"Look how he swallowed the hook. Can't get it out!"

Misha Zaitsev caught less than anybody, but that did not dampen his spirits. As soon as the float trembled, he was full of excited exclamations and fantastic guesses about the size of the "big fellow" that was coming; and when the hook came up without even bait on it, he shouted gaily: "Got off, darn him!"

The trouble was that his imagination carried him away. He could just see that smooth, shining, fat chub somewhere down below, over by the other bank; he saw its fins waving as it came closer and closer, hungry as could be, noticed that appetizing worm, sniffed round its tail . . . and here the picture was too much for Misha. Seizing the rod with both hands, he jerked it up with enough energy to grass a four- or five-pound fish—if it had been there.

"Wait a bit, let it take the bait properly," said Mitya.

He was lying on the bank, languid from the sun. He did not want to move. Through the crook of the arm propping his head he could see the Don stretching far into the distance and turning to the right by Tyapkin Hill.

Somewhere in that hill was the cave where Vasili Tyapkin and his two brothers lived eight hundred years ago. Vasili stood on that hill with his telescope—no, of course, there weren't any telescopes in those days—well, anyway, he stood there looking along that very same Don, and along the road, and at the forest that wasn't there any more. And when he saw a rich merchant he gave his robber's whistle and then he and his brothers took everything the merchant was carrying—food and manufactures—and gave it to the poor.

Later on, Lebedyan was built.

Well, he would be leaving tomorrow. After some years he would come back again, the club would have been built long ago, and somewhere in its walls would be those 247 bricks which Mitya had brought with his own hands from the old barracks. He had thought of putting a mark on them so that he would know them again, but then he had remembered that the walls would be plastered.

He would come back with a big suitcase. And inside it he would have presents for Vitka and Misha and all the boys. And a really special present for his mother, something very big and beautiful and expensive.

He would not send his mother a telegram to say he was coming, but perhaps she would know somehow without one. . . . Here Mitya was not being quite honest with himself; he did not want to acknowledge the thought, but perhaps the local paper would say that Dmitri Vlasov was returning to Lebedyan as a specialist in . . . well, a specialist in something.

What if he came back and built a water pipe-line, so that people didn't have to go down to the Don for water? Though if he were going to build, a pipe-line wasn't very much. . . . Better build a factory . . . the Lebedyan Tractor Works. . . .

Lebedyan . . . yes, a nice town, it certainly was. Good apples, a fine river, and a grand set of boys. How soon could he finish in Moscow and get back again? Five years—that ought to be enough. He'd be nineteen then. He'd be like . . . like whom? Like Volodya Petrenko's older brother who worked at the same place as Mitya's mother, the Agronom State Farm. He was a specialist in fruit and vegetables. Not very interesting, that. Though the teacher at school had talked about experiments with new kinds—you had to graft them somehow. . . . As for himself, when he got to Moscow, he'd choose something . . . something. . . .

"Mitya, are you asleep?"

"No, why?"

"Coming in for a swim?"

Volodya Petrenko was already stripping off his shirt. Mitya was just going to do the same when his eye fell on the buckets and he remembered that he had promised his mother to bring water. Picking them up, he hurried home.

2

The day of Mitya's departure found his mother in a state of utter confusion. If somebody had come along and told her not to let her boy go to Moscow, to keep him at home with her, she would certainly have done so. But nobody said anything of the kind, and with an aching heart she prepared everything for the journey.

There was such a lot to tell him, so much to warn him about, but the words would not come. Anfisa Ivanovna had not been away from Lebedyan for twenty years and did not remember much about big towns, but her mother's heart feared her boy might not be treated properly, and she would not be there. Who would treat him badly, or how, she could not guess, but she was tormented by vague forebodings. The more she thought of such things, the smaller Mitya seemed to become, until at last she felt as though it was just a little child she was sending out into the world.

Of course, there was her sister living in Moscow—Mitya was to go to his aunt straight from the station. But for some reason no telegram had come from Moscow in answer to hers, and in any case—an aunt is not the

same thing as a mother, especially an aunt who has not seen her nephew for twelve years.

All these thoughts kept whirling round in Anfisa Ivanovna's head until she was utterly confused, and her last admonitions came out in stray sentences, with no noticeable connection.

"See you're careful crossing the streets."

Anfisa Ivanovna went out into the entry and back again, moving things from one place to another, then for some reason lighted the primus stove and put it out again.

"Mind you do as older folks tell you."

For the tenth time she began packing the suitcase and suddenly remembered something else.

"Keep away from drink."

She wanted to say that she would miss him, it would be lonely, she would be waiting for his letters, but all that came out was:

"And keep away from bad company."

How could you guard him against everything?

Mitya's friends came in the evening, three hours before the train was due to leave. They sat quietly until it was time to go, rather solemn, conscious of participating in an important event.

Each one took Mitya's departure in his own way.

Volodya Petrenko, who would himself be returning to his vocational school in Ryazan in a few days, regarded it a normal stage in a normal course of events. Here was a young fellow growing up; got hands, got a head—use 'em. Volodya quite unconsciously modelled himself on the instructor who was training him as a turner. The instructor was a man of fifty, stern, taciturn and with a dry sagacity. Volodya was not quite sixteen; the sternness came fairly easily to him, the taciturnity rather less so—sometimes his tongue longed to chatter—but as for the dry sagacity, Volodya simply adopted a number of his instructor's wise saws—among which was: got hands, got a head—use 'em.

Misha Zaitsev was delighted for Mitya's sake, and thought him the luckiest boy in the world to be going to Moscow. Why, he had heard there were forty cinemas there—if not more! And you didn't have to be sixteen to go in the Metro, he knew that for a fact. And sometimes houses were moved about, so that you went to sleep in one street and woke up in another. And as for jobs—why, there were so many that if he himself had the chance, he would never think of just sticking at the same thing all the time, he'd try this and he'd try that, after all everything's interesting. He'd go to a vocational school and if he didn't like that one he'd just leave it and go to another. . . .

The one who felt Mitya's departure the most painfully was Vitka Karpov. He envied his friend keenly; he would have given anything to be in Mitya's place. But just to clear out without his mother's consent—no, that wouldn't do. Besides, he would be sorry to leave his baby sister. And, anyway, he wasn't a kid to go and run away from home. But how to make a change and strike out, he did not know.

It was time to leave for the station.

In the thick dusk they walked through the town, crossed the bridge by the mill dam and came out on a broad dusty street with the houses of Pushkar District on either side.

A slender young moon rose. It gave little light; it seemed to have come out only to preen itself.

Even less than during the day could Mitya realize that he was actually going away. His mother plodded despondently along beside him. Volodya was carrying a suitcase, Misha panted under a rucksack, and Vitka lugged the basket of provisions.

"I'm going . . . I'm going," thought Mitya. "Tomorrow at this time I shan't be here. . . ." In the darkness he touched his mother's blouse—as though accidentally, and suddenly he was so sorry for himself and his mother and Lebedyan that he felt a suspicious stinging in his nose, near his eyes.

The station was full of people, some returning to college or school in Moscow, others going home from summer holidays. The station lights illuminated only the buildings themselves, all the rest was darkness. The train was coming from Yelets and would stop for three or four minutes only. People tried to guess where their particular coaches would stop, carried their luggage about from place to place, got separated and went about calling each other. There was a general bustle and noise—sometimes merry, sometimes agitated.

Anfisa Ivanovna stood quite still, small, lost, unhappy. There was nothing more she could do for her son. He was beside her, but he was already gone from her.

Vitka made his way to his friend in the darkness, and shouted in his ear above the noise: "I *will* get away, though!"

"Where to?" asked Mitya, not understanding at once.

"Maybe I'll come and join you. Mind you write."

Misha Zaitsev, constantly dashing off and reappearing, came racing back once more full of excitement and news.

"Hi, Mitya, you're in luck! A man's just told me you'll have a FD engine. They'll stop to take on water in Kashira. Go and watch. The train attendant's in the fifth coach. You'll have two dogs with you on the train. One's a hunting dog, I don't know what the other is. You're allowed sixteen kilograms of luggage. . . ."

Breathlessly he poured out everything he had heard, happily certain that the information would be of the greatest assistance to his friend in getting to Moscow.

There was a distant rumble, then lights appeared. The noise and bustle on the platform increased. The engine rushed in, businesslike and irritated, slowed down reluctantly, and stopped.

Anfisa Ivanovna still hoped to tell her son something more, something especially important; but the boys were already carrying his things into the coach. Mitya's head appeared briefly on the coach platform, then by a lighted window; there was a piercing whistle from the train attendant, the ground trembled, the train began to move, and people dropped from the steps as though it were shaking them off. The train gathered speed, and rounded a curve.

Now the station was quite dark, quiet and very empty.

The three boys came running back to Anfisa Ivanovna.

"Aunt Anfisa, Mitya's gone off in fine style!" Misha shouted. "He's up on the luggage shelf!"

Volodya pulled his sleeve, with a vague feeling that this was not the moment for shouting.

"Come along home, Aunt Anfisa," he said staidly. "And don't you worry about Mitya. Every bird has to leave the nest."

The instructor in Ryazan had every cause to be satisfied; his seeds of wisdom had fallen on fertile soil.

Chapter Two

1

The train arrived in Paveletsky Station, Moscow, the next morning. In the evening Mitya had lain down on the third shelf with his suitcase, basket and rucksack by his head, and made up his mind to think over everything ahead of him. But as soon as he had settled down comfortably to start his thinking he fell fast asleep.

He was awakened by a knocking on the partition. That must be the goats wanting water. He was just going to turn over on the other side when somebody pulled his foot.

"Hey, there, wake up! Moscow!"

Mitya made a dive for the window, expecting to see Moscow looking like the picture post-cards or the newsreels. What he saw was occasional red brick buildings and a network of railway tracks over which the train bumped from line to line.

The passengers were moving towards the doors.

Once on the platform, Mitya's first idea was to get rid of his luggage. He felt that as soon as his hands were free, everything else would settle itself. He easily found the cloak-room—a stream of passengers was going in that direction.

A stout man in a dark-blue overall took Mitya's things away somewhere, came back and wrote something on a piece of paper.

"Insurance?" he asked.

Mitya said nothing.

The woman standing behind leaned over to him.

"How much do your things cost?"

"I'm not selling them," said Mitya quickly.

"No, it's not that," laughed the woman. "You have to say how much your luggage is worth."

"A hundred roubles."

The man handed over the receipt. Mitya was free.

Only now did he remember that his aunt must be in the station, he was to have waited by the coach so that she could come up and ask: "Are you Mitya Vlasov?" He tried to find his way back but could not be sure which was the right platform, so in the end he decided to go straight to his aunt's house.

He went out on to the square before the station, feeling his pocket every moment to make sure his money and papers were safe.

He had thought so much about his first sight of Moscow that he was not at all startled by it. Yes, of course, it was bigger than Lebedyan. And noisy. And there were a lot of cars. Well, and what of it? He wasn't a kid. And as for not knowing which way to go—well, take somebody from Moscow and put him in Lebedyan, he would be lost too. Let him try to find

Donside, for instance, when the Don had two sides and one was Donside and the other was just the side of the Don.

All he had to do now was just to go up to somebody and ask where Spiridonievsky Street was. Nothing in that!

Passers-by would probably have been surprised to know of the defiantly bold thoughts in the head of this boy; all they saw was a country lad standing in the middle of the pavement by the station, turning confusedly to one side or another when anybody jostled him.

People all looked so busy that it took some courage to stop one of them. But after all, he had not come to Moscow to stand about dawdling. He had to find his aunt, and then get fixed up. . . .

The thing now was to find his aunt.

Mitya began asking where Spiridonievsky Street was.

The first four he asked said they were strangers themselves.

Three others did not know.

Two people simply pointed—in different directions.

The tenth stopped.

"Spiridonievsky Street? That's a long way from here. Do you know Mayakovsky Square?"

"Yes, I know it," Mitya lied. He felt ashamed to admit he knew nothing at all of Moscow.

"Well, go to Mayakovsky, and then ask there."

Mitya began all over again.

Ten minutes later he was in the Metro. . . .

What words are there for the first impact of the Moscow Metro on a boy of fourteen, straight from Lebedyan?

Had anybody told Mitya when he descended the escalator and entered the spacious hall that the walls would now fall away and reveal the sea-bed with all its strange inhabitants, or a machine would descend from the ceiling and carry him fifty years into the future, or promised him some other miracle—he would have accepted it without surprise.

His capacity for amazement was spent. Anything was possible.

When the train came roaring out of the tunnel, Mitya entered the coach as calmly as the most seasoned passenger. Those five minutes in the Metro station, he felt, had given him maturity, wisdom and staid dignity. As for poor Misha, Vitka and Volodya, and Mother, and all the other people who had never seen this marvel—they were left somewhere far, far behind.

From Mayakovsky Square he walked to Spiridonievsky Street without even wondering at the great buildings, the lumbering trolley-buses and the stream of cars. There is a saturation point for impressions too; beyond this point they are no longer absorbed, but simply float over the surface of consciousness.

This is just a sort of quick glance, thought Mitya. I'll take a real proper look at everything later on.

He easily found No. 13 Spiridonievsky Street, mounted to the third floor and rang.

Nobody came.

Mitya took off his cap, smoothed his hair and rang again.

Not a sound from inside.

He pressed the button and laid his ear against the door; yes, the bell was ringing, he could hear it. He rang again and yet again. He decided

to count to fifteen and ring once more. He repeated this a number of times.

Then he sat down on the top step and ate an apple.

Again he began ringing. He was not yet particularly worried, only rather annoyed with his aunt because he was wasting so much precious time. He could have spent it better in the Metro, riding to the railway station and back again.

He went out into the courtyard and sat down on the bottom step by the back door.

Two boys were kicking a football about. One stood between two goal-posts made of schoolbags, and the other, a boy of about thirteen, took a running kick at the ball. The goalkeeper, eyes screwed up, made a leap for it. They were not very good, and they became rather worse when they saw Mitya watching.

"Want to have a go?" asked the one who was kicking.

"Don't mind if I do," said Mitya.

He took a penalty kick. There was a bit of argument as to whether it was a goal or whether the ball had struck the non-existent goal-post. After that they all fooled around, dribbling and passing. The two boys began whispering, and the goalkeeper turned to Mitya.

"What's your street?"

"I haven't got a street."

"No, but really?"

"It's true. I don't live anywhere. I've only just come."

"From the country?"

"No, from a town."

"What's it called?"

"Lebedyan."

The goalkeeper looked at the other boy.

"Kolya, have we had that in geography?"

"No, it's just some little place or other."

"It's not just some place or other," said Mitya. The goalkeeper turned quickly.

"Who was born there?"

"I was."

"No, stop a bit. Seriously. What's there in Lebedyan, some factory or what?"

"There isn't any yet, but there's going to be."

"There's going to be everywhere. It's not famed for anything, anyway."

"You're wrong there. Turgenev used to come to our town."

"What Turgenev? The writer?"

"Yes . . . *Hunter's Notebook*."

The boys exchanged glances. Kolya turned back to Mitya.

"Why've you come here into our yard?"

"I'm looking for my aunt. I'm going to live here."

"Grand! You'll be our centre forward. Which is your aunt's flat?"

"Sixteen."

"Orlova? I know. Her fuses are always burning out. I put them right for her. . . . But stop a bit, she's gone away!" Kolya cried.

"What d'you mean, gone away?" Mitya gasped in alarm.

"Last week. Went off somewhere—something to do with her work."

Mitya sat down on the step. The boys came up closer.

"Do you know anyone else in Moscow?"

"No."

"H'm," said Kolya thoughtfully. "Just came along for a visit, I suppose, eh? Where are your things—at the station?"

"Umhu."

"Well, my lad, the best thing for you to do is turn round and go right back home again. Have you enough money for a ticket?"

"Yes."

"Then, you'll just have to go straight off to the station and find out when the next train leaves. And another time you'd better think twice before you pay surprise visits a thousand kilometres away."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," Mitya flared up.

"Don't be a fool, I'm telling you sense. . . ."

He turned to the goalkeeper.

"Come on, we'll tell Mother about this poor kid. Maybe he can sleep with us tonight. He looks pretty down in the mouth."

With the stern injunction: "You wait here," they ran off.

Mitya did not wait.

He ran back up the stairs to his aunt's flat, rang desperately again and again, hammered at the door, and desisted only when he saw that the letter box was stuffed full of newspapers—evidently it had not been emptied for some days.

No room for doubt. His aunt was not there.

The first thing was to get as far away from that yard as possible. He wasn't going to wait until Kolya brought his mother along and they asked him the same questions all over again and then started calling him a poor kid and saying he looked down in the mouth. . . .

That Kolya! . . . He thought a lot too much of himself. As though it was all his own doing that he happened to live in Moscow.

Mitya went quickly out of the yard, hesitated whether to turn right or left, decided that it made no difference, and almost ran until he had put two or three blocks between himself and No. 13.

He had not yet fully realized that he was all alone in Moscow. Everything had happened too quickly. Only yesterday evening he had been at home with his friends, and now here he was with nobody, nobody at all. . . .

He walked on and on. He had no particular aim; he only turned in the direction where he saw more people.

Sometimes he passed cinemas and stopped to look at the stills displayed in glass cases.

He ate buns with rice filling, cabbage filling, jam filling. In any case he had not his fare back—he had lied to Kolya to get rid of him. Well, if he hadn't enough money anyway, what was the use of saving it? . . . He ate ice-cream, perhaps he ate rather too much ice-cream, his tongue went numb.

As a matter of fact Mitya was not feeling so very despondent. He could always get home without money, if it came to that. They wouldn't put him off the train. He'd tell the guard how it had all been. After all it was the sort of thing that might happen to anyone. So there was always a way out if he really did have to go home.

But the thought of Misha Zaitsev's disappointment, Vitka's face, and his mother's sighs was not to be borne. And to go back for such a feeble

reason—just because his aunt was away! Imagine Lomonosov running back home again because of something like that!

But if he was not going home, he must do something, and at once. He must get fixed up. A thousand plans rushed through Mitya's head; they all ended gloriously—Mitya telling his friends the story of how he spent the day wandering about Moscow and how he fixed himself up; that was all right, but to decide on the first step, to think what to do now was another matter.

Mitya postponed it. It was much easier to tell himself there was plenty of time, plenty of things he could do. He would just stroll about a bit more and then settle his affairs.

He looked at buildings, went into gardens and stared into shop windows until he was nearly down to Okhotny Ryad.

His eye fell on the Central Telegraph Office. He went inside. It seemed to bring home, Mother, Lebedyan very close to him. He could picture to himself the line running from him to them, you could reach out and shake hands, you could talk, tell them everything and ask advice.

He took a telegraph form.

It is not so easy to write a telegram for the first time in your life, especially when there is so much to say.

He wrote his Lebedyan address, then chewed the end of the pen, wondering how to get everything on the form, and finally wrote: "I am well love Mitya."

There was still a lot of space left, but the main thing was said; he was not going back home empty-handed.

After he left the Telegraph Office time seemed to fly—it was difficult to set about anything.

Mitya was now in the very centre of Moscow, and the swift rhythm of its movement caught him up. He found himself hurrying like everybody else, checked himself and walked more slowly. Sometimes he felt as though he were going round in a circle, walking down the same streets again and again.

So much had happened, so many wonders were passing before his eyes that Lebedyan seemed to have faded into the far distant past. Life had turned a somersault since morning and become unreal, fantastic. . . . Is this me walking about Moscow? Me? Is all this really happening to me, Mitya Vlasov?

Dusk had begun imperceptibly to fall. Stars came out—the faint stars that shine over cities; then the street lamps flashed on, lights went up in the windows, and all of a sudden Moscow seemed to have donned a sparkling evening dress.

Mitya began to feel a faint uneasiness.

With the fall of night he had lost all sense of direction. Wherever he looked he saw the same street-lamps, the same lighted windows. Headlights blinded him. His feet were starting to ache. He wanted to sit down. Still more he wanted to lie down with the moonlight falling in a pale band on his quilt and the hens fussing and flapping as they settled down for the night on the other side of the partition.

For a long time Mitya went on drifting about the streets of Moscow. Sometimes he sat down on a bench in some garden, drunk with impressions. Many a time he wanted to stop somebody and ask: "Excuse me, but where can people spend the night here?"

His senses already dulled, he found himself walking along a pavement, then for some reason sitting in a trolley-bus, then looking into some shop window . . . and at last landed in the Metro. It was very comfortable, that soft upholstered seat by the window. The train rushed along underground, then the tunnel seemed to burst into light and the train flew into a palace. Mitya lost count of these palaces. Every station was so marvellous, it seemed impossible there could be another like it, and then the next one would be even better!

At one o'clock Mitya came to Paveletsky Station, drawn to a place in some sense familiar.

He went to the waiting room, settled down on a seat in one of the corners, and decided to spend the night there.

In the early hours he was wakened by the cleaners sweeping the floors and then washing them with some strong-smelling mixture.

He had to go out on the square again. Everything was very quiet and strangely empty. The buildings seemed to loom closer in the deserted streets—as though they had come out to breathe the fresh air of dawn.

On one of these buildings, a five-storey house, Mitya saw a great board stretching up the wall. It bore the words in huge letters:

WHERE TO WORK WHERE TO TRAIN

Mitya stopped and stared. This was meant for him, Mitya, standing there on the pavement; it was he who was invited, called, offered a choice. So he was needed here—really needed. Mitya remembered Misha Zaitsev's advice: "Don't answer right off, say—I'll think it over."

He started to read the notice. The left-hand column did not concern him, that was clear. He turned to the right. There he found a dozen vocational schools. How could he choose between them? The people there would know best themselves how to teach him a trade. And after all, if he didn't like one school, he could always go to another. . . .

An hour later he was by the door of Vocational School No. 28.

He was told that the director, Victor Petrovich Golubev, would be there for morning assembly at 6.45.

Mitya walked up and down, looking at the building, peering in through the windows of the ground floor where he could see some sort of machines. Then he stood looking along the street, trying to guess which of the few people coming would be the director.

An old man approached, leaning on a stick. That was not the director. Then came an officer, his high boots shining in the sunshine. Two young fellows with satchels turned the corner—students, probably. A girl ran past with a bottle of medicine. A janitor came out and began sweeping the pavement, swinging his broom in great sweeps like a scythe. A cart came by carrying fruit syrup. Another girl hurried past. . . .

"Good morning. Whom do you want?"

Somebody touched his shoulder. Mitya turned.

He saw a tall, thin man, grey at the temples, with eyes that struck Mitya as wonderfully gay, lively and interested.

"I want the director," Mitya answered, and pointed at the door of the vocational school.

"Why are you here so early? Nowhere to sleep?"

"I slept at the station," Mitya replied with a surprising frankness.

"And where did you go when they started to wash the floors?"

"Went out and walked about."

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday."

"Been riding in the Metro?"

"A bit."

Mitya could not understand how this man knew everything—about the Metro and the floors at the station and that he had had nowhere to sleep. . . .

"Well, come along, we'll go to the office."

Five minutes later Mitya was standing by the director's writing desk, holding his cap. The thin man hung his own cap on a hanger in the corner, smoothed his grey head, and looked carefully at Mitya with eyes that had become serious.

"Well, here we are. Now tell me how you happened to come to just this school?"

"There was a board at the station."

"I see. And what do people learn to be here—do you know that?"

"Skilled workmen."

"I'm asking about the trade."

"I don't know."

"So you want to come and train here without even knowing what you'll be training for?"

"Please—what trades do you teach here?" asked Mitya after a moment's hesitation.

"Now that's what I'd have asked first of all if I'd been you. After all, you're not choosing a shirt, you're choosing work for your whole life."

Victor Petrovich paced up and down the room, looking at Mitya reprovingly.

"We train mechanics, turners and milling-machine operators. Which would you like to be?"

"I don't mind."

"So you want to train first and choose afterwards, eh?"

"No—why? I can choose now."

Victor Petrovich gave Mitya such a piercing look that the boy felt as though his very thoughts were visible—especially when the director said drily: "And if you find you don't like it—there are always other schools, eh?"

Mitya was silent.

"Now listen to me," said the director. "You can sleep here for a night or two, I'll settle all that, and meanwhile think it over and talk to the boys. If you decide for certain what you want to be, then come to me tomorrow. But it's got to be for certain. Understand?"

"I understand."

"Go along, then. I've work to do."

Two days later Mitya Vlasov was enrolled in the mechanics' section of Vocational School No. 28.

Two days flew past, days filled with unaccustomed activities and new impressions.

There was the medical inspection. He was weighed and measured; people tapped his chest and peered into his inside with an X-ray. Then a school uniform was issued—a whole pile smelling of new cloth and leather.

They filed off to the bath-house, marching in step. Mitya kept pulling down his tunic and trying to hear his own thick-soled boots rapping smartly on the road.

It was like some new, fascinating game.

Then they were drawn up in the big assembly hall. A man, whom he heard later was the head instructor, began to call the roll. Everyone had to say: "Present."

Mitya felt hot with nervousness about saying: "Present" out loud when his name was called.

He liked everything he saw, he was bubbling with delight inside. He wanted to make friends with every boy in the hall, he even smiled at the gangling lad behind who gave him a painful pinch during roll-call.

"Vlasov!"

"Present!" Mitya heard himself shout in a voice not his own, and felt as though he had made a long public speech.

It was as though he had just shouted out to an audience: "I'm here! Present! I, Mitya Vlasov from Lebedyan, come to work and train. And I like you all. You're fine, and I promise you I'm going to be fine too. I'll work really hard. . . ."

There were many other thoughts of the same kind crowding into his mind, but Mitya had no time to sort them out because the director came out in front of the assembly and began talking in a quiet voice.

Victor Petrovich too was stirred. Many a time already he had stood before the lines of boys at the beginning of the school year, and always he had the same great wish to find words, special words that would really sink into their hearts and make them understand. . . . And as he looked at the six hundred heads, his thoughts ranged forward into their future.

He saw them standing in the assembly hall, ordinary youngsters of fourteen and fifteen, but he also saw them as citizens whose education, as well as training, had been entrusted to him. There were future Communists among them, men who would fling themselves with devotion into building up the country's economy. And it made him proud to think that the seeds sown here in the school would also have their part in the flowering of splendid achievements.

He looked at the teachers and instructors. Sixteen Communists—those were the men who would bring these lads on. There was plenty of difficult, slogging work ahead—to weld these six hundred differing youngsters into a single community with the right spirit and code.

How much that he could not yet know lay concealed within them! Some would leave with a "five" rating, or even the top rating of six, others he would have to send for again and again, trying to make them realize how wrong their behaviour was and what it would lead to; many would go to distant parts of the country and he would hear of them with pride; all of them would grow and develop before his eyes, and he longed intensely

to guard them against all the many mistakes which unfortunately they were sure to make. . . .

All this could not be packed into a speech, and there was no reason why it should be.

The director made a short address of welcome, spoke about the honour of the school which they must uphold, said a few words about discipline and wished the pupils success.

He felt, as he always did, that his speech had been formal and desiccated, that he had failed to convey all that was most important.

To Mitya, however, it was the finest speech he had ever heard. He personally had been welcomed, he personally had been wished success, and he personally must uphold the honour of the school. Never in his life had he been given such an important task.

By evening Mitya was in his own hostel, in the room which he shared with other boys of his group. They still felt strange and awkward together, and kept taking furtive glances at each other.

With a great clatter the second-year boys who lived on the same corridor came running past; now and then one of them peered in to take a look at the newcomers.

Mitya had been warned that some of these senior boys had a way of snatching new boys' caps or giving them a clout over the head. It was one of these who had pinched Mitya at roll-call. With an idea of checking this traditional school "hospitality," in School 28 one second-year boy was put in a room with five or six new boys. Being one among six, he could not get away with any tricks even if he wished.

In Mitya's room this sixth bed belonged to a lad named Vasya Andronov. He was already working three days a week at a factory; he had a third rating, and truth to tell, was not too well pleased at being put with new boys.

How they stared! He would have to be on his best behaviour all the time to keep his end up as a senior. Of course, they would all be minding their p's and q's; probably he'd have to stitch a clean collar-lining on his tunic twice a week now. And for any little thing he did, Olga Nikolayevna, the matron, would tell him he ought to set an example.

He did not mind helping them if there was anything they did not understand in the workshop—but all this soap and water and washing your neck!

And they looked the kind that would even wash before they went to bed. Just his luck!

Mitya's bed was next to Vasya's. He eyed his neighbour with great respect. Vasya had come back from the factory half an hour before—for the second-year boys had begun their outside practice. Vasya's tunic, dark with sweat and machine oil, did not bunch clumsily like Mitya's, it lay compactly on his small body. And when Vasya came into the room he flung his crumpled, oily, shapeless cap on to his night-table with such a splendid swing, smoothed back his light brown hair with such a grown-up gesture that Mitya felt an absolute kid beside him. And then to crown it all, Vasya pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and sat down to read it.

"Anything interesting?" Mitya asked politely.

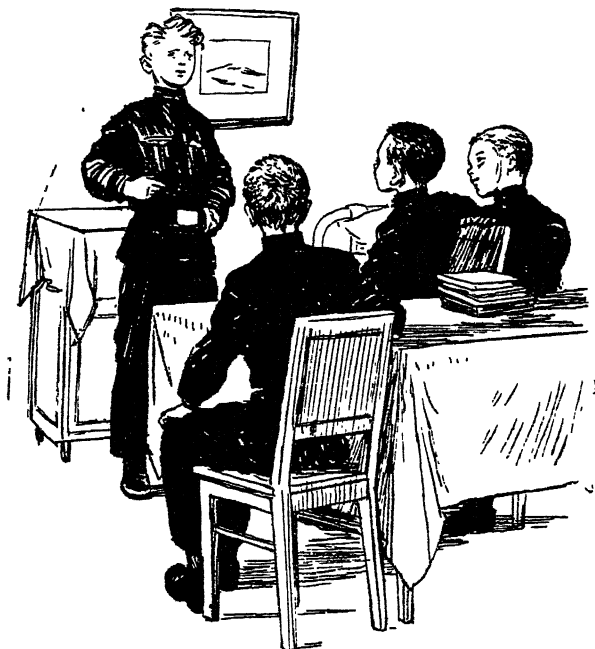
"Yes, quite a bit," Vasya answered. "Like to take half?"

He carefully tore the paper down the middle and handed one sheet to Mitya.

At that moment the matron entered.

"Now, boys, you'll have to choose a monitor. . . . Andronov!" She flung up her hands in horror. "Why are you sitting on the bed, and in your work clothes, too? Let me see your hands. Go right away and wash down to the waist and then change your clothes. You ought to set an example, Andronov!"

Vasya went reluctantly into the wash-room. Coming back, he con-



fided to Mitya that Olga Nikolayevna wasn't so bad on the whole, but she could drive a man mad with her soap and water.

The next thing was to choose a monitor. That is not so easy when people are still strangers. There are only appearances to go by, so usually the biggest and strongest is chosen.

In this case it was Petya Funtikov. He was a head taller than the others and broad-shouldered—a sturdy, red-cheeked lad with a shy smile who came from Gorky region.

He had been accustomed to working in the fields after school, and helping the blacksmith. When he finished the sixth form he told his parents he had decided to go to vocational school. He was given a real send-off with music and song. His father after a few glasses kept pointing to Petya and whispering significantly, as though it were a great secret: "He's going away! To MOSCOW!"

He was chosen room monitor without a dissenting voice.

Petya looked about him for something to do. His new status demanded action of some kind, so he climbed up on a stool and adjusted the loud-speaker to improve its tone.

"What time do we get up?" he asked Vasya Andronov.

"At six-thirty."

"What if we don't wake?"

"There's a bell."

It amused Vasya to see the new boys so nervous and excited. What had they to be nervous about? Tomorrow they would be given their first hammer to make with twenty hours to do it in—and there wasn't more than four hours' work in it. But even twenty wouldn't be enough for some of them; they'd be sure to make a mess of it! But in theoretical study, they'd probably be better than he was. He had had only four forms at school, and he'd heard that this year's boys had six forms or even seven. Look at the monitor—there's a lad for you! Taken all round, they didn't look a bad lot; he'd probably be able to get along with them all right. Of course, they were new, probably felt a bit strange at first, poor kids. Put them in his shop at the factory—they wouldn't know whether they were on their head or their heels. Maybe he ought to try and break the ice, start them talking.

"Well, monitor," said Vasya, rising. "You're in charge here, what about getting us all acquainted?"

He took the lead by shaking hands with Mitya, and then with the others.

"Who's your instructor?" he asked casually.

"Ilyin," answered Mitya.

"Matvei Grigoryevich? He's all right. Knows what he wants."

"Is he strict?"

"Of course. Got to be strict with your kind."

Feeling that this was not quite what he had been intending, Vasya went on: "After all, he's responsible for you. He'll be with you in the workshop and in the canteen, and he'll come and see how you're getting on here too. Like a kind of father. You'll get on with him all right. He finished the school himself in '45."

Vasya talked about the instructor, then told them that in their first year they would have one day theory, one day practice. Theory was boring. The food was good. Smoking was not allowed. They were taken to theatres and museums free. They would not earn much in the first year, but he was making out quite well in the second; the head instructor was a tough nut; but in general it was a very decent school. You get a good training—last year's boys were doing well, some of them had started high-speed machining; their portraits were in the papers. . . .

"And now we'd better turn in," he suddenly concluded, "or we really may oversleep in the morning."

"What about something to eat first?" Mitya suggested, looking round at the others. "I brought some things from home for my aunt, but she'd gone away."

He took a parcel out of his night-table and handed it to Petya Funtikov.

"You share it out. You're monitor."

The late supper completely loosened their tongues.

It turned out that all six were keen on fishing. There was a hot discussion as to the advantages of different ground-baits, seines and rods; they praised the perch for biting well, and abused the roach for its tricks. Senya Voronchuk turned to Funtikov.

"How's the harvest your way?"

"Spring grain's very decent. The wheat's taller than I am."

"How much does a workday come to?"

"Three and a quarter kilos."

"Not bad," said Senya approvingly. "Our rye's good this year. We got two and three-quarters advance."

The talk turned to livestock. Kuzmich, the bull at Funtikov's collective farm, was famous all over the district. And a boar had just been bought with such ears you could hardly see his eyes.

But all that was nothing to what Senya Voronchuk was bursting to tell them about his village, Poltava way.

"First of all there's our geese. . . ."

But Mitya was not at all interested in the geese and broke in with the information that Agronom State Farm where his mother worked grew eighteen kinds of apples, the best of them were called "susleper."

Vasya Andronov burst out laughing at such a meaningless name, but when Mitya handed him a "susleper," he most certainly found nothing wrong with the taste. . . .

The first awkwardness had long melted away; the boys were all talking at once, everyone bursting in and no one getting a chance to finish what he was saying.

"At home we've got. . . ."

"On our farm. . . ."

"I remember once. . . ."

The noise awakened Seryozha Boikov who had been dozing, and he leaped right into the middle of the talk with the information that the famous actor Cherkasov had been to their children's home the previous year.

"I was standing as it might be here, and he was just there. . . ."

Put shortly, they had simply stood side by side.

In half an hour, just as they were thoroughly enjoying themselves, the warning bell went for "lights out."

Vasya Andronov showed the others how to fold their new clothes neatly.

Then they put out the light.

The first to fall asleep was Seryozha—having been brought up in a children's home, he was used to hostel life. Petya Funtikov tossed and turned a few times, remembering how pleasant it was to lie in the hay. Senya Voronchuk lay home-sick in the darkness. . . . Mitya remembered that in Lebedyan his mother was asleep long ago, and to keep his thoughts from going any further along those lines he pulled the sheet over his head, made up his mind to count to a hundred—and fell asleep at seventy-four.

The house was wrapped in slumber. The newly chosen monitors, the boys from distant villages, the boys who had grown up without parents—all slept. As yet none of them in their dreams saw themselves as skilled workmen or inventors, none dreamed of medals or fame. . . . On this first night their dreams were all of home, of rivers and woods, of the train—and of Moscow which they had seen at last.

Good-night, boys, and pleasant dreams!

Chapter Three

What a pleasure it is to hold in your hands a "job" still warm from the friction of your file! You look at it and remember what it was like when you got it in the morning —ugly and shapeless; now it already shows the result of your work, your skill. In imagination you see it completed—shining and beautiful; you long to finish it and go on to the next job, to something more difficult. You look at the things about you and imagine making them yourself. You regard them in a new light—how are they cast or forged or cut, where are they drilled, where are they machined.

The workshop gradually becomes familiar, you know every mark on the vice, every inch of the work bench. The tools begin to obey you, as though they understood and were trying to please you. Each has its own personality. The rough, forthright bastard file doesn't like too much discussion and fiddling measurements, it gets right down to the job at once. The barrette file is gentle and sly—it knows how to smooth over obvious flaws, to put a gloss on its work. But the stern, implacable angle ruthlessly shows up all its tricks.

You smooth the whole surface with the barrette file until it shines and casts reflected sun-spots on the floor. You know well enough that one place is not quite right, but you hope that with such a beautifully finished job it will not be noticeable.

Mitya kept putting off the moment when he must check his work with the angle.

Again and again he polished the metal with emery paper until the surface was smooth as silk. But at last he took the angle from his pocket, laid it on the surface, and looked at it against the light.

There was a gap.

However he turned it about, however he shifted the angle, the gap was still there.

He closed it in one place and it appeared in another. It seemed to grow bigger and bigger as he looked, it wasn't just a tiny gap, it was a great chink, a draft seemed to whistle through it.

The angle is implacable. No surface polish can deceive it.

The "job" had lost all beauty for Mitya. It was rotten, just plain rotten. Got itself up all shining and thought it could get away with it. . . . But I'll just strip off all your gloss; I'll teach you to try and get by like that!

Sternly he clipped it in the vice and bore down on it with the rough file.

R-r-r! Aha, that makes you squeak! Take that! And that!

Where's that gap? Let's have it! We'll soon settle it. This isn't a game, lad. We aren't going to make any more mistakes, lad. We haven't time for that, lad.

When you talk to yourself like that it feels as though it wasn't you who were to blame, but somebody else whom you're teaching.

Just that morning the instructor had given him a forging of a square-headed hammer. The rough, dirty piece of metal was only very dimly reminiscent of a hammer-head. But with the first touch of the file it began to gleam, in some places the steel literally shone, and he wanted to get rid of all that ugly surface as quickly as possible.

It was a wonderful hammer he was going to make! Twenty hours was surely more than he would need; he could finish much faster than that. What would happen to the hammer-head afterwards? Perhaps it would lie on a shelf in a shop, and somebody important, some famous engineer, some Stalin Prize winner, would come in and say: "Let me see some hammers."

The shop assistant would put a dozen or so on the counter, and the famous engineer would pick up Mitya's hammer at once.

"This is the one for me. You can see it's been made by skilled hands. Wrap it up, please."

Mitya filed and filed eagerly, without even looking up.

Time flew. Every minute was full from roll-call to dinner time, and when you have been working really hard it feels grand to fall in noisily in the shop and march over to the canteen.

They had not far to go—across the big yard and into another building. After four hours concentrated work Mitya felt gay and light-hearted. It was not the same high spirits with which he ran off to the pictures or to bathe in the Don in Lebedyan; it was something different. He laughed the same way, he shouted the same way, but it was the gaiety of an adult, of a man who has been doing his job and doing it well.

He was hungry in a different way; he washed his hands in a different way—this was work-dirt. He was proud of the round blisters on his palms, at the base of the fingers.

You are not supposed to make a noise in the canteen, but how can you have dinner quietly if the other boys are all round you and there's something you simply have to tell every one of them? . . .

Chairs scraped, spoons and forks rattled. A great pile of fresh bread stood on a large plate in the middle of the table. There was an appetizing smell of soup, fried potatoes and meat. Jelly stood in glass dishes at each place.

In a moment Mitya had a steaming plate in front of him.

The four friends occupied one of the tables. Petya Funtikov ate with slow gravity. He was already group monitor in the workshop. He wiped the last gravy from his plate with a piece of bread and then laid his knife and fork neatly side by side. Seryozha Boikov hurriedly gulped down his soup and meat, eyeing the jelly; he was always sorely tempted to begin his dinner with the sweet. As for Senya Voronchuk, his friends always knew beforehand what he would say about the dinner—that they cooked better in Poltava. This did not, however, prevent him from eating all that was set before him and asking for a second helping. But he always gave a good excuse for his appetite.

"A second helping'll put more beef in my muscles, and I'll work better."

Each left the canteen as soon as he had finished, with a certain after-dinner languor.

Mitya joined several boys sitting in the sun on a pile of boards. Some of them were from other groups. They talked about their work, about football and about the instructors, and boasted a little about what they had been doing in the workshop.

"Today they gave us a hack-saw to make."

"What's your group?"

"The twelfth."

"Who are you fooling? Matvei Grigoryevich says the working schedule's the same for all the groups."

"Maybe, but our instructor brought in a hack-saw today."

"What d'you mean, brought it in? To show you, or what?"

"To show us. He said we'd be making it."

"When?"

"I don't know—sometime."

"Why don't you say so then, instead of talking about doing it today. They can show you a tractor, but that doesn't mean you can make it. . . ."

Mitya sat quietly, his eyes half-closed against the sunshine. His friends' voices came to him in fragments.

"Has the post come?"

"Army won eight to one."

"I tell you, Paul Robeson doesn't care a rap for all their threats. . . ."

"The Chinese gave them hell!"

"If he plays the fool, we'll go to his mother about it. . . ."

"Hide that cigarette, the instructor's coming. . . ."

His thoughts drifted lazily. It was Kostya Nazarov who was playing the fool. The one smoking was the boy from the twelfth group who had told them the yarn about making a hack-saw.

The afternoon flew by even faster than the morning. Evening came, bringing nostalgia. It was worst of all just after lights-out.

Try as he would, he could not fall asleep at once. He listened enviously to Seryozha's sleepy grunts, to Funtikov's even breathing. He stared at the street-lamp outside, hoping to tire his eyes, but it was all no good. The pillow got hot and he turned it over on to the other side. The blanket did not cover him properly; the sheet kept slipping down. . . .

He told himself that everyone ought to sleep properly at night, that there was work to be done tomorrow; a year would soon pass, then there would be the holidays, he would go home, come out of the station and see the flour mill and elevator. . . . As soon as he got to the elevator, Mitya knew that he was not going to fall asleep now. So he began remembering everything, one after the other—his mother, the Don, the apple-trees, fishing, his mother again, school, again his mother. . . .

A loud whisper came from Senya Voronchuk's bed in the corner.

"At home they're making jam these days."

Mitya said nothing—perhaps Senya was talking in his sleep.

"Are you awake?" asked Senya, not addressing anybody in particular. It did not matter who answered, so long as somebody did.

"Yes. Why?"

"I said—they're making jam at home, now. The plums are ripe."

Silence followed, and when Mitya did not break it, the pleading whisper started again.

"We've orchards right down to the river. . . . What's the name of your river?"

"The Don."

"Ours is the Vorskla," Senya answered, glad of somebody to talk to. "The bank's steep, you dive off it easily. Can you dive?"

"Of course. Everyone can!"

"Head first?"

"Don't be an ass. How else do you dive?"

"Well, some like to jump in feet first," said Senya apologetically. "Do you have goat-suckers your way?"

"What's that?"

"It's a bird with a long beak; it's called that because it sucks the milk right out of the goats' udders." Senya burst out laughing. "That's all just a tale, of course. Some goat-herd thought it up in the old days to fool the kulaks. He drank the milk himself and put the blame on a bird. That's why they started calling it goat-sucker. Did you take the horses into the river?"

"Of course I did."

"Riding 'em?"

"Of course. How else can you do it?"

"I made one swim against the current. A grand horse, he was. Black as the devil's chimney. . . ."

At that moment there came a sleepy murmur from Petya Funtikov's bed.

"Pull with your right. . . . Back water, back water!"

"He's in a boat," whispered Senya enviously.

"You were telling me about a horse," Mitya reminded him, but Senya stopped him impatiently.

"Quiet, let's hear what he's dreaming about."

Both held their breaths, afraid to stir.

"Your knife's blunt, take mine," mumbled Funtikov.

"Gone to cut rushes," Senya explained.

Nobody else had such luck as Petya; he dreamed constantly, and not just a farrago of nonsense where somebody chases somebody else, or somebody falls from a great height; no, Petya in his dreams saw the Volga, his own village, his home and family.

Mitya and Senya waited for Petya to say something else, but only a sleepy snuffling came from his bed. At last Senya lost patience, he reached out and shook Funtikov's foot.

"Petya! . . . Hey, Petya, what's next?"

For a long time Funtikov did not stir, then he sat up with a jerk and with eyes still closed began pulling on his trousers, under the impression that it was morning.

"Stop, it's all right. I woke you. It's still night. Lie down again."

Petya lay down obediently. He was obviously too dazed to take anything in.

"Were you cutting rushes?"

"Yes."

"And did you bathe from the boat?"

"Yes, I went in."

"Was it deep?"

"Deep enough."

"That's all. Don't be mad that I woke you. Go to sleep again."

Petya needed no permission; he had not the slightest doubt that he was still dreaming.

He always wakened in the morning with a sense of embarrassment, wondering what daft thing he had been saying in his sleep this time for the others to laugh at. Look at it how you like, it was not very dignified for a monitor to dream of his mother, and go and tell the whole hostel about it, what's more.

In the workshop, Petya's and Mitya's places were side by side, but their way of working was different. Petya felt very definitely that as monitor he ought to work extra well. He never hurried as Mitya did. He knew it was best to start very carefully, and then step up speed. It is the same with mowing—no good putting all your strength into your swing right away at once, you only make your arms ache. . . . Funtikov studied the markings on his forging intently. This would make a splendid hammer-head if only he went about it the right way. Of course it was a bit difficult to remember everything the instructor had said, but if worst came to worst he could always ask.

And by the way (thought Petya as he filed) he would have to find out what the working schedule for the group was; he didn't want the same thing that happened with one of the harvesting teams at his collective farm the previous year, when the last two weeks' work had had to be done in a feverish rush. After all, it was not only the instructor who answered for the group—he as monitor shared the responsibility.

Petya stopped for a second to straighten his back and glanced quickly at the other boys. Nobody slacking so far. Seryozha Boikov's forehead was even wet. You could trust Senya Voronchuk too, a good worker. But Kostya Nazarov, now, they'd have to get after him. Thought too much of himself! Probably got a mother who spoiled him. . . .

Stop. . . . Can't file here, or I'll file off the marking lines.

Kostya Nazarov's vice was by the window. For the first hour in the morning Kostya usually worked hard. But then he began to feel he'd been standing at the bench an awfully long time, was there any sense in going on? After all—why should he? What would there be when he'd finished? A hammer-head. But why on earth should he bother to make it when he could ask his mother for seven roubles twenty kopecks (the instructor had said that was the standard price of a hammer) and buy it in a shop? According to the schedule, a hammer-head should be made in twenty hours. What rate of value did that put on Kostya's work? Seven-twenty divided by twenty . . . well, say about thirty-five kopecks an hour. Pretty thin. He, Kostya Nazarov, considered his time worth much more than that.

And anyway, to make a hammer—that wasn't work. A hammer, indeed—the last word in technique! For driving nails. If he had to make anything, then at least let him make something people would look at and admire. Some machine that did ten times the quota. If it were something like that, now, Kostya would show what he could do. But to waste his time on a piffling little job like this—not he!

"Now then, show me how you're getting on." The instructor was standing by him. Matvei Grigoryevich's keen glance travelled over the forging, then over Kostya.

"Why aren't you wearing a belt?"

"It's hot."

"Whatever you're hot from, it isn't the work you've been doing. Didn't you understand what I told you at the beginning?"

"Nothing to understand. D'you think I've never seen a hammer before?"

Matvei Grigoryevich was twenty-three, and had finished this very school himself only six years previously. He had seen plenty of Kostya

Nazarov's kind, so he did not lose his temper at the boy's impudence; he only became most silkily polite.

"I don't doubt that you've seen hammers, but I doubt if you've had much to do with them. The marking lines on your forging are filed off. How do you intend to continue?"

"I haven't thought yet."

"Better start thinking, then. I can wait. I've plenty of time. You're the only one here who can't grasp simple things. The others are getting along all right."

The instructor stood waiting, his eyes fixed on Kostya.

A minute of this was enough.

"Matvei Grigoryevich, give me some other job," said the boy.

"There's nothing easier than this."

"Not something easier, something more difficult. What's the sense of spending my time on this? It's a kid's job!"

"For any ordinary pupil, of course, it's not so difficult," the instructor agreed. "But you've spoiled even this kid's job. I'll have to keep you back on practice work while the rest of the group goes ahead."

"What practice work?" asked Kostya, highly offended.

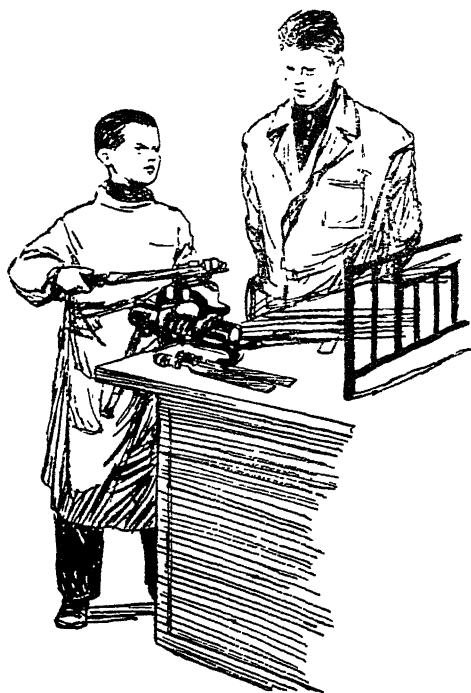
"Cutting plates, cutting tubing with a hack-saw . . . that sort of thing. I certainly can't trust you to fill the orders that come in. As for the group schedule—some of the others will probably be able to make up for what you fail to do."

Matvei Grigoryevich spoke very quietly and deliberately. He was well aware that every word was a whip-lash on Kostya's vanity. He knew that with boys of this kind shouting, persuasion or appeals to reason were quite useless. But they hated to be put in the shade, they could not stand being regarded as commonplace and dull, and contempt could sting them to tears.

Kostya stole a glance at his neighbour on the right, Seryozha Boikov. It was hard to tell from his face whether he had heard anything or not. He always worked with lips pursed for a whistle that did not come; Seryozha knew that it was hardly the thing to whistle in the workshop—after all it was lessons—but he badly wanted to, so he blew tunes noiselessly.

Seryozha worked with zest because his comrades were working all round him. He had been in a children's home for five years, and could not conceive of a life without friends at hand all the time.

He had no apprehensions about the hammer-head. He had done some handicraft work in the home and knew how to handle a file. Matvei Grigoryevich had grown up in a children's home too. . . . Maybe Seryozha



would be an instructor some day. But as yet he had no real plans for his future. There never seemed to be time, there was this and that to think about. And after all, why worry? Everybody's life goes on through all its stages and his would too. After the hammer he would make a hack-saw. . . . The days are gone before you know it.

Next year he would be going to the factory (and he would buy a whole kilo of sweets with his first wages). Wouldn't it be grand if the group never broke up! But that was the worst of it—as soon as you got used to the crowd, they scattered to different places. Now—if they could all live in the same town, some in hostels, some in their own homes. Then they could go and visit each other. There were few times in his fifteen years when he had really been a guest anywhere; he had no parents, and going to the boys in another room at the hostel wasn't the same thing. . . .

Kostya Nazarov had invited him home, that was true, but he didn't much want to go. Kostya was a conceited ass, he was lazy and cheeked the instructor. . . . Yes, he must have a talk with Petya Funtikov and the other lads. . . .

Seryozha carried out his intention that evening.

"He asked you home today, you said?" asked Funtikov.

"Not specially today. Any time."

"What's tomorrow? Sunday? Well, invite Nazarov to come to us."

"To us? Where?" asked Seryozha, taken aback.

"In the hostel. Our room."

"What for? Just for a visit, or what?"

"For a visit, if you like. Whatever you want to call it. We'll have to get some biscuits."

"Biscuits for a fellow like that?" groaned Seryozha.

He bought the biscuits, nevertheless, but did not put them on the table; for the time being he left them under his pillow.

When Kostya arrived he found all four at home. He was a little surprised—but after all, what difference did it make?

"Hello, fellows!" he called gaily, halting in the doorway.

"Come in," Senya Voronchuk invited him.

"Say, you're fixed up fine here."

"Are you any worse off at home?"

"Huh—I should say I am. Here you've got nobody over you, do as you like, but I've got the old girl fussing round me all the time, nagging and sniffing and crying with her why did I do this and why didn't I do that, and what's going to come of me . . . makes you sick!"

"Who's that you're talking about?" Mitya enquired.

"Oh, well—she's all right really, not a bad old sort . . . just has to be kept in her place."

"Might be a good idea to let her know the way you talk about her." Funtikov's glare at Kostya boded nothing good.

"I was only joking," Kostya hastily changed his tone. "But here in town there isn't all that 'honour thy father and mother' stuff that you have in a village—it's simpler. Why, I heard that in the country a mother'll give a fellow a box on the ear even when he's grown up, and he'll just say: 'Thank you for teaching me to behave.' Isn't that right?"

"Something like that," answered Petya.

"Of course, it's all a matter of cultural level," remarked Kostya

loftily. "Here, you could go and complain about a thing of that kind. But of course in the country it's different. . . ."

"You leave the country alone," said Senya angrily. "It'll be the same for you wherever you are."

Kostya began to feel something ominous in the air; maybe it was not just for a friendly visit he had been brought here; he'd better be careful.

"Why are you all at home?" he asked.

"Waiting for you."

"Oho!" said Kostya. "I'm honoured."

"You can be," Petya agreed.

Kostya took a box of cigarettes out of his pocket, opened it and put it on the table with a flourish.

"Help yourselves," he invited them. "If there aren't enough, we'll get more."

Seryozha was just reaching out when his hand was arrested in mid-air by Petya's voice, saying: "Thanks, we're not smoking." To give a natural finish to his movement, he picked up a cigarette, read the factory mark: "Kazbek, Java Factory, Moscow" on the side and put it back in the box.

Kostya looked from face to face, paled and rose.

"Are you going to lay into me?" he asked. "You're four to one!"

"Four to one," Petya agreed.

Kostya began edging towards the door, watching the others cautiously.

"Lock the door, Mitya," said Senya.

Kostya lighted a cigarette and blew smoke-rings in an effort to appear at ease. But the rings had such extraordinary shapes that they added to his panic by testifying to it.

"What was it all about with Matvei Grigoryevich yesterday?" Petya asked.

"Been tattling, have you?" Kostya turned to Seryozha Boikov, who answered briefly: "Fool!"

"Nothing special happened," said Kostya, speaking very fast. "I spoiled a hammer, that's all. . . . That's all. Costs seven-twenty, I can pay for it right now if you want."

He fumbled in his pocket and brought out everything there was—money, a comb, a pen-knife, and chocolate paper.

"But why seven-twenty?" Petya enquired.

"The state price of a hammer."

"Your reckoning's not quite right," Senya Voronchuk observed.

"What d'you mean? The instructor said the price was seven-twenty."

"The hammer costs seven-twenty, but there's quite a bit paid for you too."

"Me? Who pays anything for me? You?" Kostya asked hotly.

"I, among others. Everybody."

"My mother feeds me, father pays alimony for me."

"Idiot!" said Seryozha Boikov.

All four gazed at Kostya in silence.

Apparently they did not intend to beat him. Kostya became easier in his mind, and at the same time more observant. And the first thing he noticed was that all four were staring at him as though he were some strange specimen from somewhere.

"Do you read the papers?" asked Petya in tones almost friendly.

"Of course."

"I suppose you're lying."

"No, I'm not."

"Well, we'll see. Who's the President of the World Peace Council?"

"The World Peace Council?" Kostya repeated, seeking time. He would have given anything to find that unknown name at his four judges.

"All right. You don't know. Let's try something else. . . ."

"I can tell you the whole football table for last year if you like," Kostya proposed.

"We can do without it, thanks."

"Let him say where our biggest hydroelectric stations are being built," Mitya suggested.

"Do you think I don't know anything at all?" cried Kostya, highly offended.

"They wouldn't trust a fellow like that to herd cows down Poltava way, and here we've got to have him in our group." With a last look of disgust Senya Voronchuk went to the window, as much as to say that he wanted nothing more to do with Kostya or his affairs.

Even if the door had stood wide open, Kostya could not have gone. He could not walk away leaving such utter contempt behind him.

He stuttered out the names of some of the biggest hydroelectric stations, but that could not help him now. He tried to meet the boys' eyes, tried to smile, tried to laugh it off, to treat it as a fuss about nothing.

Many a time Kostya Nazarov had been on the carpet before headmasters or teachers. But to stand there before the boys in an ordinary hostel-room, to have them look at him and talk to him as though he were some mangy mongrel—never before had Kostya Nazarov experienced anything like this, and never had he felt so wretched.

The very ordinariness of the surroundings stripped him of his arrogance. He was well used to being scolded in classrooms, in school offices and at meetings, but here, in a most ordinary room, four boys who were dying to smoke refused his excellent cigarettes, put simple questions which he could not answer, and now sat looking at him in contemptuous silence. Better if they had set about him, all four of them.

"Where are the biscuits?" asked Petya Funtikov.

The question was so unexpected that Kostya jumped and said: "I haven't taken them!"

That was ignored. Seryozha pulled the packet of biscuits out from under his pillow.

"Let's have something to eat," Petya suggested. "Here, take one, Nazarov."

Kostya took a biscuit, but he let it crumble in his moist palm.

Mitya took the key out of his pocket and unlocked the door.

"You can go now if you want," said Mitya—that same Mitya from some Lebedyan or other whom Kostya had thought so commonplace. For that matter a long time ago (that morning) he had condescendingly regarded them all as quite decent farm boys—but not to be compared, of course, with the dashing Kostya Nazarov.

Such a welter of miserable feelings filled Kostya that he was afraid to move lest he burst out crying.

"Look, fellows," said Mitya, "let him take my forging, there's only a little left to do, maybe I can get another one done."

"Being mighty kind to him—at the expense of the state," Senya observed.

"If Nazarov wants us to have any respect for him, he'll have to make his hammer himself, from beginning to end." That came from Petya Funtikov.

"And if he doesn't," added Senya Voronchuk, "then I'll . . ."

Before Senya had time to say what he as Comsomol organizer would do, a lad from another group shot into the room.

"Are you playing a game? What is it? How about a biscuit for me?"

A second look showed him Kostya's red, tense face and the grim looks of the others.

"Are you having a meeting, or what?"

"Nothing special."

"Come out to the yard. They're falling in for the excursion." He was gone on the final word.

"Come on," said Senya Voronchuk, and passed Kostya as though he were a piece of furniture.

Funtikov was the last to leave. He turned to Kostya.

"Come along, Nazarov," he said in the most ordinary tone. "You can cry when you get home. If you howl in your mother's skirt, she'll maybe give you money for the pictures to comfort you."

The boys formed up in the yard, then set off to the river. Their boots were well-cleaned, the shiny peaks of their caps sparkled in the sunshine.

Mitya wanted to walk in step and pulled Seryozha's sleeve when he fell out.

When you are all swinging along and people turn round to look, it makes you feel taller, stronger, more important; that is because you are with your comrades. You have not only your own qualities, but theirs too; you are Mitya Vlasov and Seryozha Boikov who walks beside you with his snub nose pointing to the sun, and Petya Funtikov, and Senya Voronchuk behind you. Even Kostya Nazarov seems almost half-way decent when you are all marching together. And if it is in Moscow, with the sun high overhead and Red Square in front of you—you want to make the time go fast, faster, to reach the moment when your two years of training, of mere preparation, are over. . . .

"Must break step when you're going over a bridge," Seryozha pulled Mitya's sleeve.

"Why? Don't fool."

"I'm not fooling. I tell you we must, otherwise the bridge will shake and may fall down."

"What—a bridge like this?"

"Sure enough. Vibration. And then it'll be your fault."

Mitya did not quite believe him, but broke step all the same. He certainly did not want to take risks with a bridge like that.

Red Square was up a hill, so that it seemed to burst on them all at once. They came out behind the cathedral and there it was, large and spacious, with a light wind blowing across it.

"Look, that's the Spassky Gate," said Seryozha.

Mitya stared with all his eyes. He wanted to see everything at once.

He had known of the Spassky Gate ever since he was a child, knew that during holiday parades Voroshilov came out of it, and Budyonny.

He would not have been in the least surprised if now, this moment, some marshal had come riding out on a white horse—for this was not a square for small events.

After all, it was quite possible . . . why shouldn't a marshal come riding out on a white horse through the Spassky Gate? He need not actually come and speak to Mitya, but why shouldn't he ride out on a white horse on some business of his own?

Senya Voronchuk put his hand on Mitya's shoulder. "You look at those windows, and I'll look at these."

The group marched across the square, keeping their eyes on the Kremlin palace windows.

I've never done anything really big yet, thought Mitya as he gazed at those windows. But I shall certainly try, some day. I promise. . . .

When they had crossed the square, Kostya Nazarov moved up to Petya Funtikov as though by accident and said very quietly, like one speaking more to himself: "I'll make the hammer. . . . And the name of the Peace Council President is Joliot-Curie."

Chapter Four

Petya Funtikov's parents arrived quite unexpectedly. Petya wrote home regularly and received letters just as regularly, filled with all the village news—the sales of grain to the state were completed, and the goat Tamarka had got a thorn in her foot, and Nikolai had gone up to the third form—but never a word had there been about any visit to Moscow.

It was afternoon when Petya's father came to the school.

He asked the watchman where to find the director's office, lighted a cigarette and offered him one.

"My son's training here," he said.

"That's good," replied the watchman.

"Funtikov's the name. Heard anything of him?"

"No, nothing so far," the man replied politely.

"That's all right, then. Means he's behaving himself."

Ivan Andreyevich Funtikov wanted to go in at once, but he felt it would hardly be polite to walk on so abruptly.

"How's it been with rain here?" he asked.

"We've been getting some."

"We've nothing to complain of in our parts either. Quite a nice bit this year. Next year we're building a power station. I've come here to get the plans from the Rural Power Office."

The demands of courtesy satisfied, he turned and made his way to the office.

The director was out, but the secretary told him how to find the workshop.

As he passed along a corridor he saw a board on one of the doors saying: "Comsomol Committee." He stopped and entered. A girl of about twenty was sitting at a table.

"Good afternoon," said Funtikov. "I'm Ivan Andreyevich Funtikov, of Trudovik Collective Farm, Otradnoye village, Gorky region."

"I suppose you've come to visit your son?" the girl asked with a smile.

"That, and on business too. You know my Petya, maybe?"

"A little."

"Well—how's he going on?"

"He was chosen monitor of his group."

"All quite in order," observed the father. "Only, he didn't tell us that when he wrote. Well—has he any other special duties?"

"None so far."

"He's a good, strong lad; he can stand plenty of work."

"But you know, to be a good monitor isn't so very easy."

"Well—now I've come I'll look into everything," said Ivan Andreyevich dourly, although inwardly he was bursting with pride in his son.

"And his health—how about that?"

"Excellent!"

"It's his mother wanted me to ask about that," said Ivan Andreyevich.

"Your son has a 'three' rating in his work," the girl continued, and explained that this was the highest possible in the first year.

Ivan Andreyevich touched his moustache. He was slightly annoyed with his son, all the same—the boy ought to have written about all this himself, and not made his father ask.

He said good afternoon to the girl and went back into the yard where his wife was waiting.

"Come along to Petya," he said.

"Where is he, Ivan?"

"Where he should be. In the workshop."

As they crossed the big yard Ivan Andreyevich, slowing his pace to match his wife's short, hurrying steps, said sternly: "Now don't you start talking all sorts of nonsense. He's not a baby. Don't shame him in front of his friends."

He stole a sidelong glance at his wife and saw her agitation and excitement; he felt something of the same thing himself, and wanted to calm her. He touched her arm.

"They've nothing bad to say about your son, Katya."

She beamed up at him, expecting more, but he only added grimly: "At least, according to what I've heard so far. We must see for ourselves."

"The people here know better than we do," cried his wife in sudden anger.

"Nobody can know better than we do," Ivan Andreyevich corrected her patiently. "Because you're his mother and I'm his father."

He was preparing to expound his ideas of the demands which parents should make on their children, but his wife cut him short with a gesture.

"Better show me the boy, instead of talking."

She had already observed a good deal while waiting for her husband in the yard. The canteen door was close by. When it opened, the right kind of smell came out—freshly baked bread and roast meat. The waitresses wore smart white aprons. One of the cooks in a white cap came to the door for a breath of air; he stood there smoking. That's good, thought Yekaterina Stepanovna, they don't smoke in the kitchen or canteen, and he's not fat like some cooks; he's even thin, and wears glasses—almost like

an agronomist. She wanted to go up and ask him how big were the amounts they cooked for the canteen, but felt shy. When the cook went back, she stepped through the half-open door, but the man in charge, wearing a white overall, sent her away; that was quite right—why should they let strangers come wandering about in the canteen, tracking in dirt? Nevertheless, her housewifely eye had had time to notice that the tables were for four, the table-cloths were clean, that on each table stood a plate piled high with good thick hunks of bread, the right size for boys' appetites, and that there were wash-basins and towels in the entrance.

Yes, Yekaterina Stepanovna did most decidedly approve of the canteen; yet nevertheless deep down there was a little nagging ache—her son was eating food not prepared by his mother's hands; and the cook here could hardly know that Petya did not like carrots in his soup.

Now and then crop-headed boys hurried across the yard. She stopped one of them to ask the time, and took a look at him while he told her. His clothes were of good cloth, well-fitting, and he wore well-made stout boots.

Now, as she hurried along beside her husband, all she wanted was to see her son as quickly as possible; no, there was one more thing she wanted—for Ivan Andreyevich to go about his business and leave her to talk to the boy as much as she wanted.

As they came to the landing on the first floor a door opened, letting out a gay, many-toned song of files, as though they had been tuned to make a chorus. A lad in blue overalls emerged. He stared at them with boyish curiosity, even describing a half-circle round them.

"Are you looking for Matvei Grigoryevich?" he asked.

"We're looking for our son," answered Yekaterina Stepanovna.

"Stop a minute," her husband checked her, and turned to the lad.

"Who might you be?"

"Sergei Boikov, of the sixth group."

"Mechanic?"

"I'm learning."

"Well, Sergei Boikov, my son's your monitor, Funtikov the name is."

"Petya?" cried Seryozha gaily. "That's right, he's our monitor. And we live in the same room too. I'll go and tell Matvei Grigoryevich you've come."

Petya's place was at the far end of the workshop, and Seryozha arrived out of breath.

"Your parents have come. . . . They're out on the landing. . . . Come to Matvei Grigoryevich."

The instructor excused him from work, and told him to take his parents to the recreation-room.

"Get some clean cotton waste and wipe your hands well," he added, looking Petya up and down. "And—oh, run along, you don't hear a thing I'm telling you anyway."

Petya flung himself full tilt on to his mother to hug and kiss her, and she gasped at the sight of him; he shook hands with his father who gravely stroked his moustache.

"Petya!" cried the mother. "Gracious, look at you!"

"He's all right," Ivan Andreyevich cut her short. "Where shall we go, Petya? Or do we just stand here?"

Petya took them to the recreation-room. As he walked between his parents

he stole glances at them. They were just the same as they had been six months before, when he had left them in the village. But he was used to seeing them at home or in the fields. There they had seemed somehow larger, more sure of themselves, many things depended upon them; here they looked smaller, uncertain, and that seemed to bring them closer to him. For the first time he felt protective—especially towards his mother.

"And how are you getting on, Petya?"

"Fine, Mother, thank you. . . ."

"You've got thin, and how tall you are. . . ."

"He's grown, what d'you expect," said Ivan Andreyevich. "I told you not to bother him with silly talk. I've some news for you, Petya," he went on. "We're going to build a power station. Just where we always caught crayfish."

"Won't get far with it if it's left to you," said his wife angrily. "The farm sends you to Moscow on business, and you just sit here talking."

"Yes, but—" Ivan Andreyevich was taken aback. "It was you that wanted to come straight here from the station. . . ."

"Well, all right, so I did, and now you've seen the boy, go and get on with what you've got to do. Or else I'll tell them back at the farm how you look after our affairs."

Ivan Andreyevich blinked in perplexity, looked at his son for support, then rose and went, with a last stern injunction not to go anywhere without him.

"Now that's much better," said the mother comfortably, with a smile at the door. "He never lets anyone get a word in edgeways. There's only one way—you have to appeal to his public spirit if you want to do anything with him."

Petya burst out laughing. But with his father's going it certainly was cosier. His mother showered him with questions—he hardly had time to answer one before the next came. She wanted to know everything—where he slept, what the matron was like, what they had for breakfast, who his friends were and how his training was going. . . .

He answered everything with a smile he could not repress. He liked sitting beside his mother and talking about anything and everything, like an adult with a child.

Everything she told him about home was like some pleasant surprise, even if it was actually of little importance. The alder by the shed had been struck by lightning, the cock had had most of the feathers pecked out of his tail, poor bird, and Nikolai had killed a drake with his father's gun.

"As big as that, it was. I wanted to pull his ears for it, but Father wouldn't let me."

"Is Kuzmich all right?"

"Yes, he's looking splendid. Last week a commission came from town to look at him, the man started to lead him out of the cow-house and he kicked the door to pieces. . . . They praised our young pigs too, Petya. And you know—when I've got them freshly washed, all seventy-three of them—they do look like little angels. The commission gave me an 'excellent' rating for them. . . . Tell me, Petya, there isn't going to be any war, is there?" she ended with a sudden change to a very grave tone.

"No, there won't," said her son.

There was a confidence, an adult note in his voice that made his mother suddenly realize that he had not got thin—he had grown.

"Well, Petya, and now tell me about yourself, how you're going on."

She had already asked the same thing twice, had listened to everything he told her, but still she could not picture to herself her son's life—away from home.

The door opened and Seryozha Boikov's head appeared.

"Oh—excuse me," he said.

"Come in, come in," cried Petya. "Mother, this is Seryozha Boikov of our group."

"Oh, we're old friends already."

Seryozha sat down staidly and placed his hands on his knees. Yekaterina Stepanovna unfastened a package and laid out buns stuffed with cabbage.

"These are grand," said Seryozha through a full mouth. "Did you make them yourself?"

"Of course."

"Home-made things are always better than the ones in restaurants."

"And do you often go to restaurants?" laughed Yekaterina Stepanovna.

"No, but I've hardly ever had anything home-made either."

She understood that he had lost his parents.

"Come and spend your holidays with us in the summer. I make everything myself."

"Thank you very much. Although three of the others have invited me too."

They sat talking in the recreation-room a little longer, then went to the hostel.

A number of boys were there, and they all hovered round Petya's mother, drinking in every word she said. This elderly woman in her shawl seemed to have brought with her something of home, family, the familiar woods, fields and rivers. They listened to all she said about the crops, the livestock, the garden. It was enough for her to say the most ordinary phrase containing the words "wheat," "rye," or "millet," and they could see the rye and the thick wheat rolling away to the horizon, and the curly millet heads. These were not just the names of grains, they were the dearest memories of childhood.

Ivan Andreyevich returned and was not too well pleased when he at last found them in the hostel; his wife had probably been talking a great deal of nonsense, and in general, had been acting on her own.

Yekaterina Stepanovna was sitting at the table hemmed in by a crowd of boys, flushed and animated; she did not so much as see her husband come in. The matron even turned round and asked him: "Whom do you want?" A pretty thing, indeed!

"It's my father, Olga Nikolayevna," said Petya.

Ivan Andreyevich looked reprovngly at his wife.

The matron felt it was time to leave the family alone.

"Now then, boys, come along. Enough's enough."

She began to herd them out, but Ivan Andreyevich stopped her. "I've a few questions to ask about my son too."

"Oh, please do. I thought we were disturbing you."

Ivan Andreyevich coughed.

"Does he smoke?"

"Smoking's forbidden."

"I know that, and that's why I ask."

"Oh, I haven't any complaints to make about your son," smiled Olga Nikolayevna.

"That's all right as far as it goes, but it's not enough. I expect more than that."

Before leaving home, Ivan Andreyevich had prepared a whole list of exhortations and was only awaiting the right moment to pronounce them.

The matron understood perfectly well that Petya's parents wanted to talk to him, so she suggested that he go out with them into the town. Seryozha offered to show them Moscow. At the last minute Mitya Vlasov too managed to attach himself.

Mitya was already popular with the group. He always listened with such eager interest to everything his friends said, believed it even when the exaggeration was laid on thickly, and had such a happy knack on saying just at the right moment: "No—really? . . . I say! . . . Yes, and what then?"—how could they fail to like him?

Like all boys who have grown up without a father, Mitya always had a special feeling for the fathers of his friends. As he looked at Funtikov and heard him talking to his son, Mitya had a vivid picture of himself meeting his father and talking to him. There were so many things that you could only discuss properly with a man. He did not hide things from his mother, it was not that—but she almost always agreed with what he said, and if she did add anything it was about being good and honest and looking after his health. He could not go to her for advice. In fact, very soon he would be giving her advice—he worried a bit about her sometimes already, felt in a way responsible for her. Now a father—that was something very different.

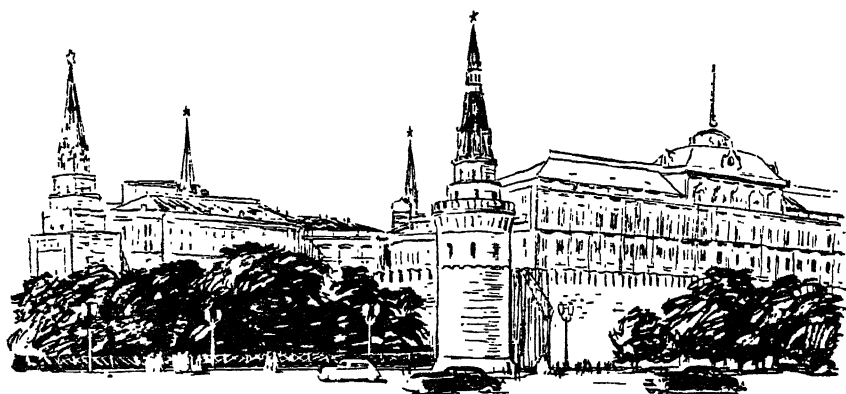
Mitya could hardly remember his father at all, but he always thought of him as having possessed all the finest qualities. If he saw something he admired in the instructor, the director or the assistant director, he was sure that his father had been just like that. If, on the other hand, some adult behaved badly, he thought at once: My father wouldn't have done a thing like that!

When he remembered how his aunt had invited him to Moscow and then gone off to the Far East without letting his mother know, he could picture his father, had he been alive, seeking out that aunt and saying: "Let me inform you—decent people do not act like that!" He had read the phrase somewhere in a book and it had impressed him greatly.

A few days before the Funtikovs' visit, Mitya had received his first wages. The school was given an order for spanners, and as they came next in the plan of training, Mitya's group got the job. Matvei Grigoryevich told his pupils that for this work they would be paid—not with the idea of making them try harder, but because he remembered most vividly the very first money he himself had earned not so many years before, and what it had meant to him.

During those two days which Mitya spent making spanners, he felt himself a professional tool-smith, instead of just a pupil. He kept an eye on what his neighbours at the bench were doing, too—this special order must be filled so well that people would come to the school again for what they needed.

Somebody, by some unknown means, managed to get hold of the paste used by the die-cutters to put a finish on their work. Mitya got through his



filing and grinding early and, although spanners are not supposed to be given this final polish, spent two hours bringing them to such shining perfection that he could see his face in them.

Before handing them in, he checked them long and carefully. First he laid the pattern on each one in turn, then checked their plane surfaces with his angle, and measured them with calipers.

Yes, everything was quite correct, nothing forgotten, he could take them to the instructor—but somehow he was reluctant to part with them. He picked them up one by one—heavy, shining, finished tools. He wished he could start using them. If only someone would give him a hundred nuts to tighten, maybe some machine to assemble, like a self-propelled combine that would go straight away on to the great fields of wheat. . . .

Mitya always had that sense of regret when he handed in a tool he had made. There it was, his work, the thing he had produced, it would go away somewhere, into other hands—and he would know nothing more of it; if only he could have seen the tool he made being actually used! After all, its life began only after it had left him.

Three days later came Mitya's first pay-day. The money was not very much; many of the boys had often had more, but that was different, that was their parents' money, and this they had earned by their own work. . . . At first Mitya thought of sending it to his mother, but it seemed silly to send such a small sum, so he kept it. It lay there in his night-table, and Mitya could not think how best to spend it. To buy sweets, as Seryozha Boikov had done, was no way to spend his very first earnings, so he waited for something to crop up which would suggest a worthy use for it.

Before setting off with the Funtikovs, Mitya raced up to his room, took out the money—still in its envelope—and slipped it into his tunic pocket. After all, you never could tell when a man might want money, going about the city with his friends!

Ivan Andreyevich walked in front with his son, and Yekaterina Stepanovna followed with the other two boys. Seryozha, who wanted to talk to everybody at once, kept dashing forward to Ivan Andreyevich and back to Yekaterina Stepanovna, inviting them to admire this building, that garden, the statue over there. He was so bursting with information that he even explained things that needed no explanation.

"You see the militiaman over there, look, in that little tower? He'll switch on the green light in a minute, and then we can cross over. And that car that's just passed, it's a *Pobeda*, it's got four cylinders. . . ."

Seryozha had spent two years in a children's home in Moscow and felt quite competent to act as guide.

If his companions stopped to admire a building, he almost tugged them on further.

"That's nothing! You wait—I'll show you something that'll make your eyes pop!"

When they came to Kamenny Bridge, he stopped.

"Now then—what d'you think of this?" He stared at them with tense anxiety, waiting for their reaction. From his face one might have thought he had built the bridge himself and was waiting for the verdict of an inspection commission.

"Look at that granite. Touch it . . . go on, touch it!"

If Mitya had not kept an eye on him and caught his sleeve in time, he would most certainly have been run over again and again.

Petya and his father, pacing in front, were engaged in serious, unhurried talk. There was a great deal each wanted to know. The son had left his home and family in the village, the father had sent a son and breadwinner to train in Moscow. Each felt that there was nothing to worry about so far as he himself was concerned—but how was the other going without him?

"Do you keep a firm hand on your boys?" asked the father, with a jerk of his head at Seryozha who had just bought doughnuts and was pressing them on Yekaterina Stepanovna and Mitya.

"We've got discipline," answered the son briefly; how could his father possibly understand all the complex, variegated life of the school? "But I heard you were late at the farm in sending the barley to the purchase point?"

"Did your mother tell you?" asked Ivan Andreyevich quickly.

"Mother? No—why? The boys wrote me."

"They'll write anything."

"Why, isn't it true?"

"Well, we were five days behind. But our rye was grand this year, and that went in right on the dot."

"Rye's rye, and barley's barley."



"That's true," said his father apologetically, with a side-long glance at his son. He felt the conversation was taking an undesirable turn. "How many have you in your group?"

"Twenty-six."

"There you are! You've got everything under your eye, but it takes me a day on horseback to go round all I look after."

"There's always difficulties," said the son sternly. "Now if you'd got even one fellow in your team like Kostya Nazarov, you'd have something to talk about. . . . Just plays the fool. Seems to think this school's a joke. Costs the state five hundred roubles a month, and not a scrap of good is he doing. If I had my way, I'd let him know what's what. . . ."

"How?"

"Kick him out."

"That's not the right way," said his father. "It wasn't for that you were chosen monitor."

"A fellow like that ought to be expelled," Petya insisted stubbornly.

"But maybe there's something wrong at home. Why don't you go and speak to his father?"

"His father! What good's that?"

"I think a father is just a little good," Ivan Andreyevich stopped short in his indignation.

"No, Father, I didn't mean it that way," said Petya hastily. "He hasn't got a father, at least his father doesn't live with them, and his mother's always buying him things."

"I can speak to this boy if you like."

"He wouldn't listen to you."

"I think he would. He is not *my* son," Ivan Andreyevich retorted in high dudgeon.

He was offended, but at the same time found it very pleasant to talk to his son as an equal, man to man; more than that, he was even a little flattered at his son talking to him as an equal, man to man. Perhaps this was the proper moment to give Petya all the exhortations which he had prepared in his mind before leaving him.

"We'll find ways of dealing with Kostya Nazarov somehow," said Petya, after a moment's silence. "But I was wanting to talk to you about the power station. It won't be big enough."

"Why not?" Ivan Andreyevich was taken aback. "There'll be light for all the houses, and lamps along the streets. . . . But who's been telling you about it—your mother?"

"I told you—the boys write me."

"What—do they send in complaints to you, like a member of the government?"

"We need power for work, not only for the houses."

"And who's going to do the building? We're short of skilled workers."

"You needn't be. There'll be sixteen lads coming from vocational schools for the holidays."

"But they're . . ." Ivan Andreyevich began, and checked himself. He wanted to say that they were just boys who knew nothing, but a glance at his son made him think better of it.

"But will they want to work?" asked Ivan Andreyevich; he felt his voice thinning out as it sometimes did when he wanted something extra from the management for his team.

"If the plans are changed then of course we will, but for a small-capacity power house it's not worth dirtying our hands."

They settled that Petya should write to the other boys from his village who were at vocational schools, and Ivan Andreyevich would discuss the question at the farm and with the district authorities.

They continued strolling for a long time, always finding something new to admire, until at last Yekaterina Stepanovna begged for mercy.

"Let's sit down somewhere for a little. I can't walk another step."

"We can ride around on a trolley-bus," suggested Seryozha, who felt that they had seen nothing yet. Ivan Andreyevich looked at his watch.

"We've two hours left before the train goes. We had better have something to eat. Where is the best restaurant here?"

They went to the restaurant on the top floor of the Hotel Moskva and chose a table on the terrace, right by the balustrade. All Moscow lay spread out beneath them.

Who could think of eating? Ivan Andreyevich tried to preserve his staid composure, but the others hung over the balustrade, unable to tear themselves away. The wind ruffled his wife's soft hair and pulled her kerchief over one ear as she stood by the boys, speechless, thrilled, gazing at the mighty city.

"Now listen, good people," Ivan Andreyevich expostulated. "Are we going to eat or not?"

A young waitress came up and stopped by his table. Seeing Funtikov's embarrassment, she smiled.

"It's always like that," she said. "First people have to look their fill, then they remember they're hungry. When I first started to work up here, I can't tell you how many dishes I broke!"

The three boys, gazing down at the city from this lofty height, were all thinking of the same thing, although in different ways.

Seryozha was light-hearted because he was with his friends. Everything was quite clear and simple; Moscow was his for ever and he felt no awe as he gazed over the city. Everything would work out well just as it always had. He could hear the hum of traffic, trolley-buses with their vertical whiskers crawled past. To right and to left rose the airy forms of multi-storeyed buildings partly constructed, traced in fine lines like blueprints; somewhere high up on one of them a light glowed for a moment and was gone—probably an electric welder.

Seryozha wished he could be on one of those lofty buildings, right under the clouds; he would have willingly done the smallest, most insignificant job there—just to feel that he too was helping to build these fabulous erections. . . .

Mitya's head swam a little; he was ashamed of it, and leaned further over the balustrade to overcome it. Some day, when he was a really fine mechanic, he would bring his mother here, bring her right up on to this terrace and show her Moscow. That was the Kremlin over there. It wasn't just a picture, it was part of that real life in which Mitya now had his share. Maybe when he finished the school, they would all go on to Red Square on the holiday demonstration. Why not? It isn't so difficult to train well and work well if you know that you can come to Red Square and walk past the walls of the Kremlin.

Petya Funtikov felt he wanted to begin doing something right away at once, or at least to map out a plan of work for the immediate future. He couldn't just stand there admiring it all. He'd no time to waste on that. He must ask his father about the club in the village. If you climbed Crow Hill, you'd be able to see the lights of Otradnoye. If there was a power station, they could use electric combines. What were trolley-buses compared with that! He would have to write to all the lads back home, tell them not to agree to a power station with only one turbine. If you're doing a job, do it properly! . . .

He looked at Moscow, but he saw Otradnoye. It was difficult to picture to himself the Otradnoye of the future, so instead he involuntarily pictured it as Moscow.

"Are you coming to eat or not? For the last time of asking!" said Ivan Andreyevich, his patience at an end.

They sat down at the table, and the waitress came up to them.

"Your boys?" she asked Yekaterina Stepanovna.

"Guess which is mine."

The girl examined all three boys in turn, then glanced at Yekaterina Stepanovna and at Ivan Andreyevich.

"Those two are more like you, but that one—" she nodded at Seryozha—"he's the image of his father."

"Quite right!" laughed Ivan Andreyevich, "they're all mine. They'll support me in my old age. But today I'm treating them. Choose something for us—the best you have . . . and we'll take—" he glanced sadly at his wife—"two bottles of lemonade with it."

When the Funtikovs' train had gone, the three boys came out again on to the station square. For the past half-hour Mitya had been thinking deeply, struggling through to some decision. Now he seemed to have finally reached it.

"Wait here for me—I'll be right back," he said abruptly, and was gone before the others had time to say a word.

A long line of taxis stood at the station entrance. Mitya walked along it from end to end and then back again, peering at all the drivers to see which one looked the most impressive. Finally he stopped and went up to an elderly driver.

"Excuse me—about how much would it cost to go to Pyatnitskaya Street?" he asked.

The driver opened his eyes and took a good look at Mitya.

"Who's going?" he asked.

"Two of my friends and I. Look, they're over there, by the door."

The driver followed Mitya's finger but the boys were not tall enough to be seen over the crowd. He looked back at Mitya, who added quickly: "You see—I've just got my first pay and I want to spend it driving through the city. Only I'm afraid it may not be enough."

"Get in," said the driver, opening the door of the front seat.

He drove the taxi up to where the two boys were waiting. Mitya kept waving to attract their attention, but, although they were looking his way, they did not see him. When the car drew up beside them and Mitya said through the window: "Come on, get in!" Seryozha's eyes nearly shot out of his head. "Mitya—you're crazy!" he whispered.

All three sat very erect on the edge of the seats. For the first moments the unexpectedness of Mitya's bold idea prevented Seryozha from properly enjoying the ride. As for Petya, he felt that it would hardly be the thing to start asking how and why, with the driver sitting there in front. Since they were in a taxi, they ought to behave like adults. Mitya himself was delighted with his idea, but remembered to tell the driver: "I've only sixteen roubles. As soon as it comes to that, then stop."

A splendid way of spending his first money! For the second time that day he was seeing Moscow. How smoothly the car ran. But you couldn't assemble a car like this without tools!—and he, Mitya Vlasov, and his friends made them. How could he let the driver know that?

The figure on the taximeter was well over sixteen, but the silent, elderly driver did not stop. He took them through the centre of the city, took them past huge buildings still clothed in scaffolding. It may be that he himself saw the city anew, through the wide, happy eyes of the lads gazing out of the car windows, saw it once again as one sees things only in the days of youth, drinking in and remembering every detail.

Chapter Five

1

Across the landing from Mitya's room was one occupied by milling-machine learners in the eleventh group. They had a condescending attitude towards the tool-making group and in general regarded themselves as the cream of the workers. Especially Kolya Belykh. When he met Mitya in the wash-room, he never failed to call out: "Hullo, mechanicky! Filing away?"

Kolya was convinced that there was not a machine in the world cleverer than the milling machine. Of course he had an idea that there were extremely complicated turbines, and that there existed such things as walking excavators, but he had never actually seen any of these, while his milling machine was right there beside him, he could touch it, work it.

Kolya would never forget his first independent job on the machine. He was to take a thin layer off a plate known as a "rusk" from its shape.

He switched on the current and stood for a few seconds watching the cutters—like some round flower, an aster, maybe—rotating with a faint humming. The "rusk" was clamped firmly to the table. Kolya turned a lever, bringing the table closer to the cutters. A warm thrill ran through him. The huge, shining machine with its sweet oily smell responded to his lightest movement. Obedient to his will, the heavy steel table silently rose, obediently it sank. The sense of strength and power gave him a great feeling of pride in himself.

Now the "rusk" was right by the cutters. Kolya took hold of another lever and turned it slowly and carefully.

He had the feeling that he and the machine were one, that it was not inanimate cutters that were eating into the plate but he himself, Kolya Belykh, that his heart was beating not in his own breast but somewhere in the machine, that anything which happened in the machine would happen in him too.

For the rest of that day he went about in a happy glow, and whenever he became conscious of it he recalled: Of course! I worked the milling machine today!

It was this same Kolya Belykh who lived opposite Mitya and said every morning: "Hello—Filing away?"

At last one evening the storm burst—in fact it nearly came to a fight between the two groups.

It all began with a petty spat.

In the passage, right by the door of Mitya's room, Kolya Belykh thought fit to proclaim that the tool-makers were "very small fry, not worth the room they take up."

Mitya opened the door.

"Say that again," he challenged him.

"I'll say what I want."

"Go on, then—try it."

"I will if I like."

"No you won't—you're scared."

"Who of—you?"

Mitya Vlasov advanced, Kolya Belykh retreated—retreated strategically, for a moment later Mitya was in the room opposite, where Kolya's friends were sitting. But Mitya too was no longer alone—Petya Funtikov and Seryozha Boikov were peering over his shoulders.

"Look out, fellows," laughed Kolya Belykh. "Look at them all crowding in. We won't have enough chairs for all these guests."

"Don't worry. We can stand," said Petya Funtikov grimly.

"Very proper!" grinned Kolya. "Quite the right thing for filing mechanics to stand before milling-machine operators!"

"Of course—you're used to sitting around," Mitya agreed. "You've got an easy job, the machine does all the work for you."

"An easy job—huh!" Kolya snorted.

"Of course. Just set it, switch it on and then loaf around."

This insult brought all the machine operators to their feet with a howl of indignation in which only fragments of phrases could be heard.

"A lot you know about it!"

"Never seen anything but his files. . . ."

"Oh—what's the sense of talking to that lot. . . ."

Kolya went up close to Funtikov, tilting his head back because of Petya's greater height.

"You may as well confess it—you're just envious!"

"Not a scrap."

"Liar! You'd have come running over to us long ago if you could!"

"I had the chance, but I didn't."

"We all had the chance," Seryozha Boikov backed him up.

"Tell us another!"

"No, it's quite true," a tow-headed machinist thrust in. "They were all asked what they wanted to be when they first came, but they were too green to know, so they signed on as tool-makers."

There was a roar of laughter from the machinists.

Seryozha Boikov took a step forward.

"Ever seen a slot machine?" he asked.

"Yes—why?"

"Just that your job's like working one of those machines. Doesn't take any brains."

"Huh—a lot of brains you need for your files!"

"Of course we need brains—what d'you think? Can you scrape? No! D'you know what a die-maker is? He's a real professor, get that? Has to work to a micron. . . ."

"And have you ever seen a milling machine with a dividing head?" Kolya broke in hotly. "Can you set it? There's hardly a day when there isn't something about us in the papers—high-speed operators, two-and-a-half thousand revolutions—here, take this and read for yourself. . . ."

Kolya pulled a packet of newspaper clippings out of his tunic pocket and thrust it at Petya Funtikov. He made a habit of cutting out everything he could find about high-speed milling-machine operators.

Petya pushed his hand away.

"It's not about you, is it? What are you bragging for?"

"What d'you mean? I'm a milling-machine operator too."

"All the same, it's not exactly about you," Vanya Tikhonov broke in amicably. Vanya was Comsomol organizer of the milling-machine group. "But what's all the quarrel about, anyway? We're not a rich uncle's heirs fighting over the will!"

"Well, what did he want to talk that way for, then?" asked Mitya Vlasov, cooling down a little.

"You're no better. What about 'set it, switch it on and loaf around?' Why d'you want to insult a man?"

"He started it."

"What are you—kids? You'll be fighting about whose daddy's the strongest next. . . . If you want to know how sensible folk look at it—both are good jobs."

Petya Funtikov was angry with himself for having left it to one of the machinists to stop the silly quarrel. "That's what we've always said," he answered quickly—he had to keep up his group's prestige. "Leave us alone and we'll leave you alone. Tell a man he's got freckles or lop-ears and we'll let it pass, but don't touch our trade."

The quarrel was over. But the mechanics did not go. Something more had to be said to leave the two sides on an equal footing. The machinists had the advantage of being on their own ground, while the withdrawal of the tool-makers could easily look like a retreat.

Vanya Tikhonov found a way out.

"Sit down, fellows," he said. "Why wear out your feet?"

The hosts sat down on the beds, politely leaving chairs for the visitors. Vanya looked round.

"Well—have we all cooled down?"

"We're all right. No hard feelings," said Mitya pacifically, just as though it had not been he who had advanced menacingly against the machinists, quite ready for a fight.

Vanya, like a good host, finally found the right way to clear away the last awkwardness.

"What about a song?"

Seryozha Boikov started, and Kolya Belykh joined in.

Seryozha sang in a high tenor, rolling his eyes up. Kolya's voice was richer, his expression fixed as in a photograph.

The boys took singing seriously as people do in the country, they were wholly absorbed in it. None of them would now even have thought of joking or playing any trick—it would have been an insult.

The singing brought complete harmony. They felt as intimate as though they had known one another all their lives. And it seemed quite natural to start weaving plans and dreams for the future.

"After I finish here next year, I'll go on to technical school," said Vanya Tikhonov suddenly. "You know—I wrote down all I planned to do in five years, and now I'm starting to cross the things off."

"Did you write much?" asked Mitya. The idea attracted him.

"Two pages. I started when I was at school, but I have to change some of what I put down then. After all, that was over a year ago, I was just a kid. For instance—I wrote that I'd learn photography. Silly. Of course that won't do now."

"Yes, it's not worth-while putting down little things like that," Kolya Belykh agreed. "That's why you had two whole pages, because you put down everything that came into your head. A couple of lines would do for me: finish the school here, go to a really big factory and get a rating of six. . . . And of course get some good clothes, and have enough money. . . ."

"That's not worth making big plans about," said Mitya scornfully. "Anybody can do that."

"Well, what do you think of, then—something you can't do?"

"No—the sort of thing that's impossible but you do it all the same."

"What, for instance?"

"Well—" Mitya gradually reddened until his very ears glowed—"to get a Stalin Prize. The instructor told us about Zaichikov. . . . He works in a Leningrad factory. . . ."

Mitya broke off short—Zaichikov was a tool man. Maybe he'd better not say too much about Zaichikov, when they'd only just made peace.

"You've got big ideas!" Kolya Belykh whistled. "A man like Zaichikov. . . ."

He too stopped short; he remembered that one of the clippings in his notebook was about the Stalin Prize winner Zaichikov. A grand man.

"Zaichikov—yes, there's. . . ."

"I know it's a crazy sort of idea, of course," Mitya agreed. "I don't say it's the sort of thing you put down in a book. It's just something—that you sort of think about, sometimes."

Petya Funtikov remarked very soberly and reasonably that if you were making plans, you ought to build them on something solid, real. Clothes and money weren't worth bothering about—they'd come. But education, now—that was something worth-while. You didn't eat it or wear it out; it was always there. He himself was taking an evening secondary school course. What he'd do later on, time would show. He'd had all sorts of ideas about the future when he was a kid, now he'd stopped making guesses.

"But you've got a trade, or you will have when you finish. You'll be a mechanic."

"Plenty of people have started as mechanics," said Petya significantly.

Vanya Tikhonov objected that adults look ahead too. Not only individuals, but the whole state.

"That's different," said Petya, but felt less sure of his position.

"Why? The state consists of people. If the state has a plan, then all the more each person can have one."

"Of course," Mitya agreed. "For instance, I'm most certainly going to have my mother join me. Wherever I am."

"But what about the house and garden and livestock?"

"If his mother's there, then that'll all be there too," said Seryozha who had grown up in a children's home. "But you know, fellows, I seem to have all sorts of foolish ideas, not like the rest of you at all. You'll just laugh if I tell you. . . ."

He stopped, but they sat looking at him so expectantly that he plucked up courage.

"Well, don't laugh, then. . . . It's after a lot of years; I go through the city and then I turn into a fine building with a porter at the door, I leave my cap in the cloak-room and go up the stairs. And there's a door, and on it: 'P. Funtikov, Minister.' And I go in and there sits Petya."

"Well—and then?"

"That's all. . . . We sit and talk and remember the school here. . . . I told you it was just silly. Or maybe it's at the North Pole, a wintering party. And the chief's Mitya Vlasov."

"Well?"

"Well, we sit down and remember the school."

"But what do you do yourself?" asked Vanya Tikhonov.

"That's just it, I never seem to see anything about myself at all. There's all the rest of you, but that's all. And the funniest thing is that at first you don't know me and ask what I've come about, and then we start laughing and remembering old times."

"You ought to have it the other way round," laughed Kolya Belykh. "Funtikov coming in to the minister's office and finding you there."

"If only there isn't any war," said Vanya Tikhonov suddenly. "It would be awfully difficult afterwards to start all over again from the beginning."

"That isn't the worst of it," said Mitya. "It's the people that get killed. My father was killed at the front."

"So was mine," said Kolya Belykh.

"And mine," said the tow-headed machinist.

"My father was in the artillery," Kolya added. "He'd been a tractor-driver. Look, here he is." He held out a photograph to the boys. "We were taken in Smolensk; he'd done double the quota on his tractor, and he went to Smolensk to receive a certificate of honour."

"And is that your mother?"

"Yes. She died in '44. She was ill a long time, I looked after her as well as I could but it was no good. We were living in a dug-out. I was tough, I could stand it, but Mother caught cold and then it went to her lungs. . . ."

"What's that striped thing in your hand?" asked Vanya Tikhonov.

"Oh, nothing—I was just a kid then, Father bought me a toy tiger somewhere, and I was photographed with it. And six months later Father was killed. I didn't understand it properly then, of course. When I cried it was mostly because I was frightened to see Mother crying. I was too small to know what it all meant. . . ."

"Do you remember your father well?"

"Yes. Sometimes I dream about him."

"Me too," said Mitya. "My father was engine-man at the flour mill. He used to come home white with the flour. I still remember the smell of his jacket. But I can't remember his face exactly. When he left Lebedyan

for the army, Mother and I went with him to the assembly point. We must have waited by the gate a long time because he came out in his uniform and picked me up and told me to look after Mother. . . ."

"Do you even remember what he said?" asked the tow-headed machinist enviously.

"No," Mitya admitted. "I don't really remember. You see, my mother's told me all about it so often, how we went with him and how he came out and picked me up—well, I'm not really sure what I remember myself and what I know from her. The front was quite close to us then, near Yelets. I could hear the guns, and I thought all the time it was Father firing them. But he was in the Ukraine. And then a paper came—saying he was missing. I had just started going to school then. I didn't tell my mother, but I wrote a letter to my father, to his field post office—I did it in block capitals, I had just learned them. I thought perhaps he would answer it all the same. And every day I ran to meet the postman. A reply did come a month later, the political officer had written it. . . . I didn't show it to Mother, there was no sense in upsetting her all over again."

Mitya took a yellowed sheet of paper out of his pocket and showed it to the others. They did not take it, only looked at the large printed letters. The unknown political officer had wanted every word to be clear to the fatherless boy. . . .

It was getting late. They sang one more song and then the mechanics went back to their room. The quarrel was forgotten. And what serious quarrel could there be, after all, between lads of the same kind.

2

Mitya Vlasov's application was read out by the secretary of the Comsomol committee, Antonina Vasilyevna: "I ask to be accepted into the Lenin Comsomol, because I want to be in the front ranks of Soviet youth."

Mitya listened to the words he had written, nervously pulling down his tunic, feeling that they were horribly bombastic. Fancy writing that he wanted to be in the front ranks! For a moment he was afraid somebody would laugh at such conceit.

None of the committee laughed.

All the young people sitting at the table before which he stood shifting from foot to foot were the familiar companions of every day, but he seemed to be seeing them for the first time. And they seemed to look at him in a different way, too, so that he turned his eyes away to the window although he could see nothing through it.

"Any questions for Vlasov?" asked Antonina Vasilyevna.

"Tell us the main facts about yourself."

Mitya was too excited to notice who spoke.

"I was born in 1937," he started, speaking slowly so that the reply would not sound so short. "I've finished six forms at school. . . ." And that's all, he thought despondently, that's all I can say.

He wished he had something more to tell the committee, but he could think of nothing of any importance. You could hardly call it a personal record, even, if you've only been born and then gone to school up to the end of the sixth form. Probably he would only get a real record much later.

He felt hot when he had to fill up a form; two days before he had had to complete one for a factory where he would have part of his training. How he had hated having to keep answering: "No," "Never," "None," to the questions.

There were such wonderfully romantic questions:

"Participation in the Civil War. . . ."

No, he had taken no part in it. He had not galloped with Chapayev. He had not taken the Winter Palace. He had not defeated Wrangel. He had not even seen anything of it, because he had not yet been born, but if he had lived in those days, how he would have galloped with Chapayev, and fired one of the *Aurora's* guns against the Winter Palace, and crouched behind one of the machine guns that mowed down Wrangel's white-guards!

"Participation in the Patriotic War."

A tormenting question for Mitya. No, he had taken no part in it. How could he, when he only managed to get born in 1937? Was that his fault? If he'd been born a bit earlier, he'd most surely have been in Krasnodon with Oleg Koshevoy, he would have been the closest friend of Alexandr Matrosov.

"Government Awards and Decorations."

No, he hadn't any. He had a "five" in mathematics and "four" in Russian, but you couldn't call that government awards. . . .

"Do you know the Rules of the Lenin Comsomol?" asked Antonina Vasilyevna.

"Yes, I know them."

"What decorations have been awarded the Comsomol?"

"Two Orders of Lenin, the Order of the Red Banner and the Order of the Red Banner of Labour."

"Tell us about your work here."

"I . . ." Mitya stopped. He did not know how to start. There seemed little sense in saying what marks he had, the group mark-book lay open on the table. He must find something else to tell the committee, something not in the mark-book.

"I'm in the sixth group," Mitya began—although everybody there knew it; but it was easier to start from the beginning. "Our discipline in the shop is good, but at lessons it's not so good. We like the practical work, but theory goes worse."

"And who do you mean by 'we'?" asked Antonina Vasilyevna.

"Well—I mean me too," said Mitya, flushing.

"And do you think that is right?"

"No, it isn't, of course," Mitya answered. "Only so far I can't seem to help it." Now they won't accept me, he thought, and added quickly: "I know that there's no theory without practice, or rather, there can be, of course, but it's better when they go together." Now I've got all mixed up, he thought; his face was moist and the palms of his hands were clammy.

"Tell us, how should a member of the Comsomol conduct himself?"

"He should be an example to all."

"What books have you read recently?"

"*The Young Guard*, *The Story of a Real Man*, and then *The Headless Horseman*, but there's no need to count that," added Mitya quickly.

"Since you've read it, we might as well count it."

"Well, and what's happening in the world? Do you know?" asked Vasya Andronov sternly. He was rather short, and always tried to make up for it by a forbidding manner.

"Make your question clearer," Antonina Vasilyevna said.

"I understand," said Mitya. "He's asking me about current events."

"Can you answer?"

"Of course I can."

"Where is there a war now?"

"In Korea. Kim Il Sen wants the Koreans to be free and have a good life, and the Chinese volunteers are helping them, but the Americans are bombing peaceful towns. They've no pity for anybody, all they think of is what they can get out of it."

"And what is your personal answer to the warmongering policy of world imperialism?" asked Vasya Andronov.

"I completed ten spanners in less than the scheduled time, I have excellent marks for my practical work and good marks for theory."

Had some perfectly objective observer been in the room he would have felt very clearly that young Mitya Vlasov of Lebedyan, pupil in a vocational school, has engaged in an implacable struggle against world imperialism. And he would also have felt that Mitya's weapons were clean and honest—which is more than can be said about the imperialists.

"What family have you?" asked Tanya Sozina, the only girl on the committee.

"My mother lives in Lebedyan."

"And your father?"

"Killed at the front."

"Who recommends Vlasov?"

"The group organizer Voronchuk, and Sergei Boikov."

Seryozha spoke first. He said that he had known Vlasov a long time, about a year. They shared the same room. Vlasov was a man you could always rely on. He'd never let you down. Not long ago the group had been given an order for universal clamps—a very important order. Vlasov finished his quota with an "excellent" rating and two hours before the time set. That meant a saving for the state. He took an interest in world affairs. Was worthy of being a member of the Comsomol.

Then Senya Voronchuk spoke. He said that fundamentally he fully agreed with Boikov, but the committee must hear all sides of the case. "We haven't come here to pay each other compliments." And Vlasov had his faults too, which must be eradicated. Fifteen years old, grown-up, you might say, with a rating of three, yet he went sliding down the banisters to the canteen. It was out of place, and it was time he stopped. And splashing water on people in the wash-room wasn't the thing either. "You're not a kid, Mitya Vlasov."

When Senya started criticizing someone he always got carried away and could not stop; this time too, like a car skidding down a hill, he went on listing all of Mitya's defects, large and small.

"Just a minute, Voronchuk," the secretary interrupted. "Are we to understand that you recommend Vlasov, or not?"

"I most certainly do. A hundred per cent."

"Doesn't sound much like it," said Vasya Andronov.

"Taken all in all, comrades, he's a sensible, conscientious, reliable -

fellow and I'm sure he will take note of his faults and get rid of them. Isn't that right, Vlasov?"

"I only splashed water once," said Mitya, flushing.

"And will you carry out Comsomol work conscientiously?" asked Vasya.

"Of course I will."

The secretary rose.

"There is a motion before this meeting to accept Dmitri Vlasov as a member of the Lenin Comsomol. Those in favour, please raise their hands."

Mitya dropped his eyes, fearing to see some hand not raised. How stupid, he thought. Everything was going fine until he brought up my sliding down the banisters. Ass that I am—careering down to the canteen as though I couldn't get there on my feet. . . .

"Unanimous," said the secretary. "Congratulations, Vlasov. See that you never let down the honour of the organization." She shook his hand.

I'll have to go to the factory tomorrow, thought Mitya. Get hold of that questionnaire and put in "Member of the Comsomol."

Chapter Six

1

The exams were approaching.

One could feel it in the air, sense by a thousand intangible signs that all were on their toes. Mitya was in great demand in the hostel every evening, for the rumour had gone round that he dictated well. It was not only that he read clearly and with expression, he seemed to bring luck. If one wrote a page from Mitya's dictation the evening before the exam, then one would romp through.

True, people expected almost superhuman clarity of speech; he had to dictate syllable by syllable, so that it was obvious which was the right vowel in unaccented syllables and when a consonant should be doubled.

Mitya helped all his own group and the milling-machine operators too. Then one day the girls asked his help—there was one group of girls in the school, turners. Tanya Sozina, the group monitor and a member of the Comsomol committee, stopped Mitya in the corridor.

"I've heard you dictate well. I wish you'd come to us this evening. I'm a bit worried about my girls."

Mitya had no desire whatsoever to visit the girls—and probably be chaffed about it afterwards. But he knew Tanya; if he didn't go, she would bring it up in the committee. If ever she thought her group was not getting its due, she raised a row that was heard all through the school. The very fact that there was only one group of girls gave Tanya an invaluable advantage; at any meeting she could get up and say cuttingly: "Of course, there aren't very many of us—I suppose that means we can be ignored."

Tanya was always dissatisfied; she always talked as though her group had already been slighted. Evidently she believed in crying out before you're hurt—less danger of getting hurt!

Tanya's austere, adult ways may have come from the fact that she had been left an orphan after the war, with a smaller sister to take care of. The previous year the little sister had died of scarlet fever, and Tanya had

left her village and come to the vocational school in Moscow. Now she treated her group of girls like younger sisters whom she must look after and tell what to do.

Mitya hoped to wriggle out of that evening with the girls, but at eight o'clock exactly Tanya looked into his room.

"Why don't you come, Vlasov?" she asked unsmilingly. "My girls are all waiting."

He picked up a book and followed her reluctantly.

"Wipe your feet, please," said Tanya at the door of the girls' room. As though he could bring dirt from his own room to theirs.

The girls' room really was spotless and shining. Portraits and pieces of art needlework done by the girls hung on the walls over the beds, and the bedside tables all had white cloths. Down the middle ran a table and there sat the girls, with pens and exercise-books open and ready.

Tanya eyed the row of heads and then took her own place.

A small table had been prepared for Mitya, not far from the girls' table. On it stood a glass of water and a sweet.

He began to dictate. Whenever he paused too long, Tanya looked up suspiciously.

"Read everything there is, please, don't leave any of it out!" She was afraid that he might be making it easier for the girls.

Mitya really did dictate well. He pronounced double consonants in such a way that it was hard to get them wrong, and commas seemed to go down of themselves.

Gradually he became accustomed to his surroundings, left his place and began to walk along the table, glancing over the girls' shoulders.

Usually he himself corrected one or two dictations, and left it to the boys to check the rest from those. But Tanya insisted that he do them all himself.

"And eat your sweet," she ordered. "Girls, bring some tea for Vlasov."

Mitya corrected all the dictations, while Tanya watchfully followed his pencil. She was very pleased with Mitya—he had behaved sensibly, without any condescending indulgence or stupid jokes.

"Tell me, what place do you think our group will take?"

"I don't know."

"But you've dictated to other groups too. Which one has the most mistakes?"

"They vary," said Mitya evasively. He was betraying no secrets.

"You know, but you don't want to say," answered Tanya reproachfully. "How do you like our room?"

"It's all right."

The tea had somehow made Mitya feel more at ease. Strange as it might be, he was in no hurry to go. Perhaps he liked the feeling of being an honoured guest (although Tanya *had* told him to wipe his feet).

"You've got a button off your sleeve," said Tanya. "Come here, I'll sew it on for you."

"I can do it myself."

But once Tanya had made up her mind it was better to give way at once—it would be the same in the end.

She sewed on the button with single thread, not double as the boys did, but very much more firmly; then she wound the thread round the button a

number of times, made the end into a loop and did something with it, and finally bit it off.

Mitya left with his feelings in some confusion, and could find absolutely nothing funny to tell his room about the girls.

After that he began to notice Tanya when he met her in the passages. He even ventured to say good-day to her—after a quick glance round to see that nobody was looking. She would answer curtly. And he went on feeling as though they had had quite a conversation.

The button held firmly. . . .

Then exams started.

The only topic was which group had which place so far, and how to overtake the one ahead—for there was keen rivalry. Tense excitement reigned in the classrooms. When one boy was called up to the board to answer, the others were on thorns. And if the one at the board hesitated, the very air vibrated with thought-waves from the rest of the group.

The sixth group had a competition going with the eleventh—the milling-machine operators. And whatever happened in the sixth group, the eleventh knew at once. Seryozha Boikov got into a muddle in the mathematics oral, and although you could swear nobody had left the room, yet in some occult way the eleventh group, on another floor, were saying that Boikov had a three—a bare pass.

The challenge banner stood in the milling-machine workshop—the eleventh group had won it at the winter exams. Now the mechanics began coming into the shop during the intervals, standing round the banner, admiring it, and loudly discussing the best place to stand it in their own workshop.

The workshop monitor grimly escorted them out.

"It won't be gathering dust here much longer!" they would call back as a parting shot.

In reality neither of the two groups was absolutely sure of victory, but the greater their secret doubts, the greater the confidence they displayed to their rivals.

The only place where frankness and bitter truth reigned supreme was at the Comsomol meetings within the groups. Serya Voronchuk gathered the Comsomol members of his group almost every day after work or lessons. There would be a brief report, hard words for the ones who lagged, and discussion about how to pull them up.

"Look here, fellows! In just one week of exams we've got five who barely scraped through! And that's in a group with twenty Comsomol members! Seryozha Boikov—yes, I'm speaking to you! How did you come to get a three for maths?"

Seryozha rose—the gay, cheery Seryozha, and found it hard to meet his comrades' eyes. It was not merely Serya who slept in his room whom he must answer, and Mitya with whom he loved to wander about Moscow, and Petya who had invited him home for the holidays, but the Comsomol group.

"I'll ask permission to take it again," said Seryozha. "In two places I put a minus instead of a plus. I was nervous. . . ."

"It wasn't just nervousness," said Petya Funtikov. "You didn't prepare properly. Even in the very last days before the exam you never opened a book."

Mitya Vlasov was the newest member of the group, and this was only his third or fourth meeting. He felt sorry for Seryozha. Petya was being too hard on him, pounding on him like that in front of everybody. And why did he have to tell them that Seryozha hadn't had a mathematics book in his hand until a week before the exam? It was only because they lived in the same room that he knew it. And did one have to tell the meeting every little thing about a friend?

"Boikov didn't prepare properly," Funtikov continued. "And we warned him—both Vlasov and I. Isn't that right, Mitya—didn't you tell him he ought to revise his maths?"

"We were talking in general," answered Mitya, avoiding his eye.

"What does that mean—in general?" asked Voronchuk.

"Well—we were talking in general about the exams. . . ."

"And did you speak about maths in particular?"

"I don't remember exactly."

"In other words, Funtikov isn't telling the truth—is that what you want to say?"

Driven into a corner, Mitya feverishly sought some answer that would smoothe everything over for Seryozha, would not make Funtikov a liar and would not make himself sound a fool. But such answers do not exist.

There would be many more such meetings in Mitya's life, meetings when he would take the floor and tell hard truths to friends, and meetings when such truths would be told to him by those who were closest to him. At first he would be offended, would lie awake all night, and the next day would come to realize that it was all for his own good, for who would be completely frank with him if not his Comsomol comrades? But these truths must be told not only when two are talking together, when a hundred excuses can be found, when friendship takes the edge off harsh facts. One must have the courage to hear them and accept them at the Comsomol meeting. There things are put bluntly, your whole character lies on the operating table, as it were, where all can see the flaws which you yourself did not wish to recognize.

He would come to understand, that young Comsomol member Mitya Vlasov, that all those things which seemed so convincing in an ordinary room sounded utterly futile at the meeting. In the room you can say, for instance, that you don't like mathematics or draughtsmanship, or that you can't get on with some person; but at the meeting that sort of thing sounds like a snivelling kid making excuses to his mother.

"Vlasov, you live in the same room with Boikov. Do you think he prepared properly for his maths exam?"

"No, I didn't," said Seryozha Boikov suddenly. "I didn't prepare properly."

"So your mistakes weren't just from nervousness?" asked Funtikov.

"No. . . . But I give you my word I'll take the exam again."

So the one who was left looking foolish was Mitya Vlasov. It was his baptism of fire.

Most of all he feared that Tanya Sozina might hear of his stupidity. Of course there was no way in which she could hear of it, but for some reason, whenever he did anything that seemed rather good, the thought would flash through his head: I wish Tanya Sozina were here! or: If only she would come by!

Outwardly, their relations had worsened. They still greeted each other formally when they met, but when she asked him to come again and give her girls a dictation for practice in prefixes, he answered rudely: "Oh yes, nothing better to do! I've my own exam to prepare for!"

Tanya shrugged her shoulders, called him selfish and said they could manage without him. He wanted to go after her and say he had only been joking, but she was already running down the stairs, her plaits dancing as though each one had a life of its own.

That evening Mitya went up to the next floor at least twenty times, but Tanya never showed herself. And he had to think up excuses, both for himself and for the others, for constantly running out into the passage and up to the floor above. Luckily the boiler stood there, and Mitya brought hot water that evening for all the rooms, and changed the drinking water in his own room at least five times.

He felt angry with Tanya for making him humble himself like this. A nice way of repaying him for dictating to her girls and correcting all their books! Let her fuss with her girls herself. They would get threes and twos, and that would teach her not to put on airs. Why couldn't she come out into the passage—once, at least? Couldn't take a joke. And a member of the Comsomol committee, too. She probably didn't care a hoot if her group got bad marks for Russian. But as for him, he wasn't indifferent to what happened to a whole group of girls. He had read somewhere that one must never let one's personal feelings be an obstacle to the common good.

Gladly Mitya recalled this great thought. And although he was rather ashamed of justifying his wish to go up to the girls' room by such roundabout means, he picked up the textbook and made his way to the door. As he opened it he almost collided with Tanya.

"Well—are you coming or not? I shan't ask you again."

"I don't have to come," said Mitya. "All right, keep your hair on, I'll be along in a minute," he called after her as the plaits switched round the turning.

He went into the girls' room with the air of a busy man called away for a trifle. There were a good number of girls, but he saw only Tanya. Even when his back was turned he always knew exactly where she was. But he did not like turning his back on her—he felt at once as though there was something funny about the way he walked, or his tunic was bunched up.

The dictations went its normal course, then Mitya checked the books. When he came to Tanya he looked especially hard for mistakes. In one place he found "pre," instead of "pri," but Tanya said he was wrong, it was a "pri." Mitya ignored this and underlined it twice in blue pencil. He wanted to make her angry but she remained undisturbed.

He could have gone now, but he remained.

"Of course, you won't be one of the top groups at the exam," he said, addressing the whole group. "Somewhere about the middle."

"You finished seven forms at school, I've got girls who had only six and five," Tanya answered.

There was a silence, Mitya sought something more to say—as an excuse for remaining a little longer.

"You've got some nice embroidery in here."

This pleased the girls and they began showing him their work. Tanya, however, sat reading a magazine.

"I've looked again, Sozina," said Mitya, "and I think it really was 'pri' that you wrote, so you needn't count it as a mistake."

"I didn't," replied Tanya briefly.

All sorts of knitting and embroidery lay before Mitya on the table, and he praised everything indiscriminately.

"But this is nothing," cried one of the girls, with such a snub nose that she seemed to Mitya to be looking at the ceiling all the time. "You should see the embroidery Tanya's doing! Show it him, Tanya."

Tanya rose reluctantly looking very displeased, took a long roll of material out of her drawer, and put it on the table without even bothering to unroll it. The snub-nosed girl spread it out.

All the other work lost its lustre. He understood nothing about embroidery, but he felt that this was worthy of being exhibited under glass.

"Not bad," said Mitya indifferently. "And who's that?" He pointed at an embroidered figure aiming an arrow at a swan.

"Just a man," answered Tanya.

"Anyone you know?" asked Mitya.

"No, imagination," Tanya replied.

She was not angry with Mitya, but with her own girls. Why did they have to go making all that fuss about their embroidery? Tomorrow he'd be telling the whole school that the turners did cross-stitch and satin-stitch, and then the boys would give them no peace. She knew that Vlasov—there he was only looking as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, but that was only until he got out of the door. And why on earth did they have to tell him that she was doing that wretched embroidery? He would think she was making something for herself, and it was not for herself at all, Zina had asked her to do it. . . .

But Mitya told the boys nothing. He did not even think it funny that the turners' monitor should be able to embroider.

When he returned to his own room he was met with cries of: "Where on earth have you been all this time, Mitya? We've been hunting all over for you."

"I was out there," and he pointed vaguely somewhere sideways and downwards.

"It's the machinists have kept running in for you. Go over, they've got some maths problem they can't get the hang of."

Mitya was glad of all the excitement—nobody had time to enquire where he really had been.

In the milling-machine learners' room there was a sense of quiet desperation. What could you expect, when they had spent an hour and a half wrestling with one problem and it absolutely refused to come out? And to make matters worse, somebody had set the rumour going that just this problem would be included in the maths test. Nobody really believed the rumour, but everybody had that nasty little nagging doubt—what if . . .? They had tried the problem every way, from the beginning, from the end, from the middle; pencils had been flung on the floor, people had slumped noisily on to their beds, quarrels had sprung up. Somebody said it was higher mathematics, somebody else insisted that there must be a mistake in the question. . . .

They had waited so long for Mitya that when he actually did come in nobody even turned round.

"What's the good," growled Kolya Belykh. "You won't be able to make head or tail of it either."

Vanya Tikhonov showed Mitya the problem.

"He's not going to turn himself inside out to do our problem," Kostya snorted from his bed. "Why should he? If we flop in the test, it's all the better for his lot. They're always coming sniffing round our banner."

Mitya ignored this—why trouble to answer such stupid digs? He took a clean sheet of paper and carefully wrote down the problem. It did not look very difficult. He had always liked mathematics, and the abstract tanks, trains and pedestrians became for him quite concrete. It was much easier to solve a problem if you could imagine the racing train that did not know itself when it would reach station B. And when water poured into a tank from three taps simultaneously, you had to hurry up and solve the problem before the tank ran over.

"But you know, Vanya," he said, "I can't just do it like that, in my head, I have to explain it as I go along, then I understand it all better."

He began explaining and at first everything went smoothly. Then suddenly he lost the thread. And as bad luck would have it, a lot of other boys had crowded into the room. With horror he saw Tanya Sozina standing by the door. The word had gone round that Mitya Vlasov was solving a tremendously difficult problem for the milling-machine learners.

"Now we'll try it another way," said Mitya, as though he had quite deliberately done it wrong to begin with, and would then solve it correctly.

Again it went smoothly until at a certain point Vanya asked politely: "But just why do you divide by four here?"

If Tanya had not been in the room, Mitya would probably have said that he had made a mistake again; but now he began instead to explain and explain in a voice he hardly knew for his own. He could see that Vanya was sorry for him and kept on saying "yes . . . yes . . ." although all his explanations were sheer nonsense.

"Why waste time listening to all that bosh?" said Kolya Belykh. "He's muddling everything on purpose so that we'll fail tomorrow."

A number of the boys laughed, while Mitya went on explaining and explaining, although he could see well enough that it was not going to come out. Gradually the crowd melted away, and only Vanya out of sympathy kept on saying: "Yes, I understand . . . I see. . ."

Tanya, however, still stood by the table looking at Mitya, he felt, with utter contempt. He could almost feel her eyes drilling a hole in the back of his neck.

"Maybe we ought to break off a bit," Vanya suggested tentatively. "You'll be getting tired."

"Not a scrap," said Mitya. "It's only that I don't like people staring at me."

Tanya tossed her head.

"You don't need any equations here at all. It's a problem of proportion. If you don't know how, don't shove yourself forward." And she walked out of the room.

He wrestled with the problem for another half-hour, almost until lights out, conscious that even Vanya wanted him to go.

When he finally lay in bed, figures and symbols flickered before his eyes for a long time, multiplying and dividing themselves, producing square roots—and never coming out right.

He wakened in the middle of the night. He sat up in bed, and suddenly remembered the problem. And it was all quite simple! Why had he fussed with it so long? No equations were needed, the whole thing was proportion. And with a chill of horror he remembered the rumour that the eleventh group were to have that very problem the next day for their test. Could Kolya Belykh really have thought that Mitya had muddled it on purpose?

He jumped out of bed, ran to the window-sill where the street-lamp gave quite enough light, and began jotting down calculations on the back of an old envelope. Everything cancelled out beautifully, and the answer was seven, just as it should be.

Mitya fumbled in his night-table, found an exercise-book and tore out a sheet. He wrote out the working and the result, and signed the whole thing "Vlasov." He ran across the passage and pushed the sheet under the door of the milling-machine lads' room. He wanted to put on a special note for Kolya: "Don't judge others by yourself," but thought better of it.

The problem was not one of those given in the test.

2

Kostya Nazarov tore down the "Lightning Flash"—the day's "stop-press" item—from the group's shop-news bulletin board.

He did not do it secretly or furtively, but with a flourish, in front of everybody.

Mitya had hung this particular "flash" on the board in the morning, alongside the time-table. It was a big sheet of paper, and bore the words in block letters:

KOSTYA NAZAROV HAS DISGRACED
THE SIXTH GROUP WITH A FAIL

Kostya Nazarov walked past the notice-board in the morning perfectly cool and self-possessed—at least outwardly. Inwardly he was in a turmoil, but obstinate pride made him keep a bold front.

At first he decided not to go out into the corridor during recess, to avoid seeing that sheet again; then, however, it occurred to him that the boys might think he was ashamed, so as soon as the bell rang he marched out and began strolling up and down right beside the board. Now and then he would stop—making sure that plenty of people could see him, strike a swaggering pose and with a contemptuous smile read for the twentieth time those lines about himself. He even reached up and with his pencil improved the shape of the D in "DISGRACED." What he actually felt did not matter—the main thing was to show them all that he did not care a fig for their "flash."

The chief instructor of the group came past, saw Kostya at work on the D, and paused for a moment.

"A fine swashbuckler, aren't you!" he said, and walked away.

Kostya did not know what a swashbuckler was, but guessed that it was not complimentary.

Well, all right, then, so I'm a swashbuckler, am I? he thought angrily. And so what? Somebody has to be!

When Kostya received constant and severe ratings, he was apt to work himself up into a mood of desperate recklessness. . . . Huh, so that's it, is it? Well, if that's what I am, then I don't care a damn for any of you! . . . Sometimes he even had a perverse desire to show himself even worse than anything that had been said. . . . Look at that, now, all this fuss about one fail. I'll give them fail—make their eyes pop out!

So when Mitya Vlasov and Senya Voronchuk drew up level with him and—so Kostya thought—gave him a contemptuous look, he shot over to the board and tore down the sheet, in a spasm of that desperate recklessness that always inspired his worst actions; the recklessness made him feel somehow heroic, though he realized that he was doing something awful.

Defiantly he stood there holding the sheet of paper. He wanted the row to start at once, with everybody shouting and running and stamping; he backed against the wall looking quickly from side to side as though awaiting an attack.

But the whole thing fell very flat. The bell rang, all the boys streamed back into the classrooms and Kostya was left there with the "Lightning Flash" in his hand. He dropped it on the floor and slunk into his own classroom.

The next lesson was literature. Mitya Vlasov was called up to answer; the question was about Ensign Grushnitsky in *A Hero of Our Times*. Kostya did not listen particularly at first, but suddenly Mitya said something about Grushnitsky which might just as well have been said about him, Kostya Nazarov.

"Above all else he wanted to appear very dashing, and for this reason was guilty of follies and basenesses."

"'Baseness' hasn't a plural, you can't have 'basenesses,'" whispered one of the boys.

Oh, can't you, indeed! thought Kostya gloomily.

After some particularly serious misdemeanour, he always felt a dead indifference to all about him—as though he had done his part, now he only had to wait for the penalties to fall on his head. The main thing was to be on the alert, not to be taken by surprise. In general, it was much better when the penalties followed hard upon the misdemeanour—then Kostya hardly felt them in the heat and excitement, just as a man does not at once feel the pain of wounds in the heat of battle.

But no penalty came. The Russian lesson ended and was followed by history. The teacher questioned the class on the condition of the working class in Russia at the end of the 19th century.

Some of the questions Kostya himself could have answered. He even hoped to be called out to tell how the workers, failing to find the right solution, began in desperation to smash machinery at the factories and start small unorganized rebellions. Kostya could have answered much better than Senya Voronchuk, who had to have it all dragged out of him as though every sentence stuck in his throat.

But Kostya was not asked.

They always managed to pick him just when he knew nothing. Others had luck—they might know hardly anything, but they got the one question they could answer. And here was a fellow who for once in a way could answer everything, and nobody even looked at him; and then they blamed him for getting bad marks!

Several times he wanted to raise his hand when the teacher put a question, but his own particular brand of pride prevented him. He wasn't going to soap them up and try to get in their good books—not he!

To bolster up his mood of defiance he had to keep on feeling injured—to collect injuries, as many as he could find. . . . So he'd torn down their "Lightning Flash." Quite right too! It was their own fault, they'd driven him to it; now let them take the consequences!

He waited in suspense for the long recess; he would probably be called to the director then, or to his assistant, or to the head teacher; or, if not, then at least some of the boys—probably Petya Funtikov or Mitya Vlasov—would start yapping at him, and then he'd tell them a few things that would make their hair curl!

But nobody sent for him, and nobody said anything to him at all. The secretary of the Comsomol committee came into the classroom, spoke to Funtikov and to the group organizer Voronchuk, then went out without even glancing at Kostya.

There was some sort of Comsomol meeting after lessons, but that could hardly have had anything to do with him; he was not asked to attend it, although he made himself as conspicuous as possible, bristling and defiant.

Finally he trailed home.

He had to vent his rage and injured vanity on somebody, so in the evening he announced to his tired mother: "I tore down the 'flash' today."

"What flash, Kostya?" she asked. She understood nothing about it, but her knowledge of Kostya and his tone of voice made her apprehensive. "Oh dear, oh dear!" she sighed.

"Now what are you whining about?" snapped Kostya, who had only been waiting for somebody to reproach him. But it was poor satisfaction snarling at his mother. He could make her cry in a moment; the victory was too easy. So he contented himself with the ominous warning: "Put on your best dress tomorrow, the director'll be sending for you."

But nothing happened the next day either. . . . They've taken cover, thought Kostya, they want to tire me out.

It was workshop day, and the group were busy on hack-saws. Ever since that case of the spoiled hammer, Kostya had worked—as the boys put it—more or less decently. Matvei Grigoryevich treated him with aloof reserve. If he did a job well the instructor praised him—although far too briefly to Kostya's mind. When he was reprimanded it lasted much longer.

Kostya was quite sure that Matvei Grigoryevich would have something to say about yesterday's incident. But when the instructor passed the bench, his remarks concerned only the work. This was all right; that ought to be filed off a bit. Nothing more.

When the boys lined up in the workshop before going to the canteen for dinner, Matvei Grigoryevich read out the exam results so far. But he did not mention Nazarov by name, he only said that there was one fail in the group, leaving Kostya to guess that it was his.

Two days of suspense had wearied him, and he was almost glad when at last he was sent for by Vasili Yakovlevich, the director's assistant on the educational and cultural side.

"Ah! Nazarov!" cried Vasili Yakovlevich in a tone of relief when Kostya opened the door. "Just the person I wanted to see!"

One might have thought Kostya was some friend who had dropped in for a visit.

"Here, sit down," Vasili Yakovlevich continued in the easy manner he always used for friendly, informal talk, and turned to the instructor of the milling-machine group who was in the room. "Excuse me, please, Nikolai Mikhailovich, but I've something very urgent to discuss with Nazarov here, maybe you could look in again a little later."

The instructor went out, and the assistant director turned to Kostya.

"You know, Nazarov," he said, "we're in a fix, and if you don't help us out it's going to be bad."

Doesn't he know about the "Lightning Flash?"—thought Kostya in dismay, but he was given no time to collect himself.

"The exams are nearly over. You understand they're a serious matter, and our wall newspaper isn't out. The group papers are going up, the Flash sheets are coming out. . . ." (Here it comes, thought Kostya) ". . . but the main school paper has got held up. The material's all there but there's nobody to put it together. I'll give you everything. All you'll have to do is the headings and illustrations. Make it look really good. You can get paste, rulers, paints—all artists' supplies at the stationer's shop near by. Here's the money, only be sure you get a receipt or the book-keeper'll have my life."

He held out fifty roubles to Kostya who was too dumbfounded even to take it, then put the money on the table in front of the boy while with the other hand he took the receiver off its hook and dialled the director's number.

"Victor Petrovich? It's all right, everything's settled. Nazarov's promised to have it ready in two days. . . . Yes, he says he can manage. We'll have it ready in time for the district wall newspaper review."

Vasili Yakovlevich put down the receiver, picked up a folder stuffed with papers, slipped the money inside and held it out to Kostya.

"Everything's in here, articles, poems—the whole lot. If you see Nikolai Mikhailovich when you go out, ask him to come in here."

Kostya stood uncertainly, holding the folder.

"Vasili Yakovlevich—I tore down the 'Lightning Flash'. . . ." he mumbled uncertainly. But the assistant director apparently did not take it in, he was absorbed in some papers or other and only said absently without looking up: "Splendid. Excellent."

Kostya turned and went out.

A few minutes afterwards the secretary came in.

"Please call a telephone mechanic as soon as you can," said Vasili Yakovlevich imploringly. "My telephone hasn't been working all day."

To avoid questions about the folder, Kostya took it to the cloak-room and slipped it into his cupboard. The money he took out and put into his pocket.

The afternoon seemed to fly. While his hands worked, his thoughts were racing. Now he was glad to be left alone. He had important affairs to think about which nobody knew. If the director or his assistant didn't let it out, he himself would say nothing. Let nobody know that it was he who had been asked to help out the school in a time of difficulty. They didn't ask Senya Voronchuk; they didn't ask Mitya Vlasov, it was himself, Kostya Nazarov—him they couldn't do without. Senya had once said that down Poltava way a fellow like him wouldn't be trusted to herd cows. Cows,

indeed! He'd make such a wall newspaper that it would be sent to the exhibition and framed. Then let them expel him for tearing down the "Lightning Flash" if they wanted—he'd have shown what Kostya Nazarov was worth!

On his way home Kostya stopped at the stationer's shop.

First he stood in front of the window deciding what he needed. Then came long and very impressive instructions to an indifferent shop assistant who seemed quite unable to realize the importance of his purpose. Three times, in a steely voice, Kostya explained that he personally needed a complete artist's equipment—not just for sketching in some album, but for extremely important work which she might hear about in due course.

When everything was wrapped up, Kostya said sternly: "Write a receipt, please, or the book-keeper'll have my life."

His mother was not at home. Kostya spread out the items for the paper on the table, but before reading them through began considering what he should paint as a title illustration.

A locomotive was no good. Nor an airplane. Nor a ship. In the first place it was too hackneyed, and in the second, nothing of that sort was made at the school. A vice or file was not interesting—you did not have to be the artist Nazarov to draw that. A turners' lathe—but why choose that when he wasn't in the turners' group? It would be fine to draw the sea, with raging waves and gulls and thunder-clouds and forked lightning. . . . But his mental picture of that jagged flash gave him a nasty hollow feeling; it reminded him of the group "Lightning Flash" he had torn down. He drove away the thought and went on pondering about a picture for the title.

Forest, river, the moon—no good. He must have a human figure. That was the thing. After all, everything depended on man. He considered for a long time what the figure should be, and decided that the right thing would be to have a vocational school pupil in uniform. And as the school had girls, too, he would have a boy, very large, on the right-hand side, and a girl, much smaller, on the left.

He made a rough sketch. The face looked very much like that of Petya Funtikov; Kostya rubbed it out and drew it again and again, a number of times, but the face always came out like somebody—now Senya Voronchuk, now Seryozha Boikov. The girl, however, was not like anybody, it was just a girl.

Kostya spread out a huge sheet of paper on the floor, laid the articles and verses on it and began to plan illustrations for them.



The most difficult was the section headed "Stinging Nettles." It consisted of five or six brief sarcastic items criticizing the faults and failings of various people. They had to have illustrations ridiculing the culprit.

In front of Kostya Nazarov lay an item about Kostya Nazarov. He put it aside to see how the paper looked without it. All right, very decent. He even covered it with a piece of cardboard so that he would not keep seeing it all the time. But what was written there still flickered before his eyes.

Late that night when his mother came home, she found her Kostya crawling about on the floor, smeared with paint and glue. It was so amazing to see him busy with something that her voice dropped to an awestruck whisper.

"Have you had supper?"

"Don't want any." To stop any further questions, Kostya snapped angrily: "Go to bed. I'll be working late."

She had her own supper very quietly on a corner of the table and began to prepare for bed, stepping on tiptoe. She had the feeling that if she made any sharp, loud movement the whole miracle would disappear—the paper spread out on the floor and her son actually working at something.

She was already in bed when Kostya asked: "Where's my photo?"

"Which photo, Kostya?"

"The one I gave you when I entered the school."

It was in his mother's handbag. He took it out. It was rather dark, but recognizable.

He laid it down by the item saying that Kostya Nazarov had disgraced his group by a fail.

His mother, leaning out of her bed, saw Kostya about to paste his picture on a big and very fine wall newspaper.

"Kostya!" she ejaculated happily, "Congratulations, son!"

Kostya swallowed but said nothing. Then he picked up the big blunt scissors and began angrily cutting out the head from the picture. Beneath this head he drew a ridiculous, awkward body with tunic clumsily bunched and collar hanging loose. Beneath, in his best handwriting, he added the name: "Konstantin Nazarov."

When his mother rose to go to work the next morning, she found him asleep on the floor beside a completed, brightly-illustrated wall newspaper. His arm lay over the "Stinging Nettles" section.

He slept as one sleeps after a victory—perhaps one of the most difficult which can be gained in times of peace. Kostya had conquered himself.

He believed that he had fought out this bitter struggle by himself. He was far from guessing that all the boys, the director, his assistant, the instructor—the whole school had been anxiously awaiting the result of this battle to make a man of him.

Kostya did not know that on the day when he tore down the "Lightning Flash," the Comsomol organizer of his group, Senya Voronchuk, had called a special Comsomol meeting, at which the assistant director Vasili Yakovlevich and the secretary of the school Comsomol committee had also been present.

Vasili Yakovlevich at first said nothing and only listened to the boys.

One after the other they said exactly what they thought of Kostya Nazarov.

"Take him away," said Senya Voronchuk. "He only disgraces our group."

"What'll we do with him, then?"

"Put him somewhere else, in some other group."

"And d'you think he'll be any more of an ornament there?"

"We're sick and tired of him. We've done everything we can think of. We have him up at every group meeting."

"Maybe that's too often?" suggested Vasili Yakovlevich.

"Talking to him's like firing pea-shooters at an elephant," said Petya Funtikov bitterly. "Thank goodness he behaves halfway decently in the workshop at least. But to hear him talk—he seems to think he's the lord of all he sees."

"Have you done much talking to him?"

"We've even invited him to the hostel. Ask the others."

"How many times?"

"Once."

"H'm. That's a lot," observed Vasili Yakovlevich seriously.

"We can call him in here now, if you like," Senya Voronchuk suggested, "he's out there in the corridor. You'll see for yourself what he's like. Doesn't care a snap about anything."

"Every boy cares about something."

"We'll call him in, Vasili Yakovlevich—shall we? Then you'll see."

"And what do you want to speak to him about?"

"What about?! He tore down the 'Lightning Flash'!"

"Just rate him again?"

"Of course! Let him write an apology to the director."

"He'll write you a dozen; what does he care?" said Petya Funtikov.

"There you are! Of course he will," the assistant director caught him up. "You just leave him alone for the present. Not a word."

"Why, is he to do just as he likes and get away with it?"

"He's feeling very bad just now," said Vasili Yakovlevich. "Very bad indeed."

"Poor little chap! Are we supposed to pity him?"

"No. On the contrary, act so that he'll feel still worse. Leave him alone a couple of days. Leave him in suspense. He's expecting to get hauled over the coals, and nothing happens. . . . Tell me, Senya—you're Comsomol organizer, what does he especially like doing?"

"Nothing at all."

"No one's like that. Can he sing?"

The boys stared at the assistant director in amazement.

"I'm not joking. Here you are, twenty Comsomol members—the best of the group. How is it you don't know even that much about one of your own comrades—what he likes, what he's keen on? Dancing, singing, sport, acting—what does he like, this Kostya Nazarov of yours?"

Mitya Vlasov remembered that before lessons started Kostya often drew caricatures of the teachers on the blackboard.

"Does he do them well?" asked Vasili Yakovlevich quickly. "Are they funny? Can you tell who they are?"

"Sometimes they're quite like," Mitya answered, embarrassed.

"He ought to be ticked off for that too. It's cheek," said Senya Voronchuk wrathfully.

"You're very severe, aren't you," observed Vasili Yakovlevich.

It was finally settled that nobody was to say anything to Kostya about the "Lightning Flash" for the present. Senya Voronchuk was particularly glum about it. He liked to have the minutes of the meeting clean cut, with no ragged ends left hanging; this had been decided, and that. But here there were no proper minutes at all. . . .

A day passed, and another, and towards morning of the third night Kostya fell asleep on the floor, his arm covering the "Stinging Nettles" section with its caricature of himself, drawn by himself.

Chapter Seven

At the height of the examination fever there was an event which had disturbing results—the matron Olga Nikolayevna went away for a holiday. This in itself might not have caused much of a sensation—the boys were in the habit of taking her pretty much for granted—but a new matron came who had about the same effect as a stick vigorously stirring an ant-hill.

Vera Ivanovna was sent by the Labour Reserve Department. The director, who was in a hurry to get to the factory, glanced at her papers, put one or two questions and then rang for his assistant Vasili Yakovlevich.

"Would you mind coming over a moment? The new matron's here."

While awaiting his assistant's arrival, Victor Petrovich picked up the papers again and glanced down the application form.

"I see you've had some experience in educational work?"

"Yes, I have," said Vera Ivanovna.

"Why didn't you graduate training college?"

"Family troubles."

Victor Petrovich opened his mouth to ask what family troubles could make her leave college without completing her training as a teacher, but closed it again. In general, he felt much more at ease talking to the boys than to adults. And if there was one thing he preferred to keep clear of, it was these "family troubles." The very words aroused unpleasant associations. He writhed at the memory of the few occasions when he had been called to settle such cases. Everybody seemed to be in the right, and he floundered helplessly. Among his boys it was different—no matter how involved the tangle, he always knew where the solution lay; and though it might not be easy to reach it, he at least had no doubts where to look for it. But among adults everything was much more complicated.

As usual when he felt uncomfortable, Victor Petrovich looked grim, then, conscious of this, felt sorry for the girl sitting silently before him.

"It isn't easy work you're taking on," he said encouragingly. "You have to have a knack, dealing with boys."

"The main thing is the proper approach," said Vera Ivanovna. "I consider that the most important question is to strengthen discipline. Without discipline there can be no proper order."

Victor Petrovich gave her a quick glance; something about her, something in her voice or appearance struck him unpleasantly. But he threw off the passing impression with a vague: "Very well, that's all right then. . . ."

Vasili Yakovlevich came in at this moment, so Victor Petrovich introduced him to the new matron and left for the factory.

The assistant director sat down opposite the girl and examined her with undisguised interest.

"Here are my papers," she said in a businesslike tone.

"You know," smiled Vasili Yakovlevich. "I'll tell you a secret. I've not much use for all these papers."

"I don't understand," said the girl, surprised.

"Well, it's like this. I have a very deep suspicion that a human being is a much more complex creature than any form of recommendation can show. You see—if these recommendations were the work of talented writers, they might give one some idea of what a person is really like. But since they are usually drawn up by people who have no particular talent for portrait drawing, they can only give a very limited conception—honest or a scamp, married or single—and that really doesn't tell one very much."

"Do you consider they should not be written, then?" asked Vera Ivanovna, obviously displeased by the idea.

"Of course they must be written! Most certainly! . . . Where'd we be without papers? We'd have nothing to file!"

She smiled uncertainly, not sure whether he was joking or serious. In general, she found his whole appearance rather absurd—a close-cropped bullet head, red cheeks, a round face—like a gnome. Some people's faces give no hint of what they looked like as children; but it was very easy to visualize Vasili Yakovlevich at the age of ten.

He picked up the papers fastened together with a clip, and looked at them carefully.

"You're twenty-five, I see," he said. "Quite a solid age for a member of the Comsomol. . . . Stopped playing hop-scotch, I suppose?"

"That is a form of athletics I don't know," the girl admitted.

"Oh, it's not athletics," sighed the assistant director. "Just something I happened to think of. Well—do you like the circus, then?"

"The circus?"

"Yes, the circus—horses, dogs, clowns. Although they aren't real clowns these days. I remember when I was a boy—one clown bashed another on the head, and water squirted from his eyes in fountains. But now they seem to think that sort of thing's beneath the dignity of a Soviet artist. . . . I took our boys to the circus the other day. Clowns! Out came a stout man in a smart suit and started off about multi-millionaires in the West. Corruption, competition, crisis, lockouts. . . . Oh, a very learned clown, he was! I felt like inviting him here to give lectures on political economy.

Vera Ivanovna looked at Vasili Yakovlevich in considerable surprise. She wished he would get to the end of this bewildering talk; it puzzled her, she was not sure of the correct answers.

"I suppose you have a recreation-room in the hostel?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the assistant director briefly.

"With chess, draughts and dominoes?"

"Everything's there, Vera Ivanovna."

"A radiola?"

"The radiola is in the club-room. Is there anything else I can tell you?" With his head on one side he regarded her with the same inquisitive look.

"Thank you, I think I can find out everything else in the course of my work. That is to say, if you find me suitable. . . ."

"Ah, now that's hard to say!" Vasili Yakovlevich laughed pleasantly. "It's not me you'll have to suit, but first and foremost the boys. It's they who'll be the real judges. . . ."

"Yes, I know—but of course that's only in a manner of speaking." Vera Ivanovna's smile was no longer formal, but very real. "Children are often mistaken. Their liking can be bought with counterfeit coin."

"Maybe so." Vasili Yakovlevich shrugged his shoulders and then held out his hand. "Well, Vera Ivanovna, I'll leave you to carry on, then. . . . As for theoretical discussions, we'll put those off until you've got to know our young eagles. . . ."

In the evening Victor Petrovich returned and asked what his assistant thought of the new matron.

"A very earnest young lady," observed Vasili Yakovlevich.

"I'm not joking, I want to know."

"Well, what can I tell at this stage?" said Vasili Yakovlevich, rather irritated. "She plucks her eyebrows, I did see that much."

"But perhaps that's the fashion these days?" said the director hopefully—he was very anxious that the new matron should be a good one. "After all, we don't know very much about these things."

"Nothing to know," snorted Vasili Yakovlevich. "If nature's given you a certain kind of face, wear it."

"All the same, don't let's judge the girl by her eyebrows. After all, it's a matter of taste. . . ."

After that the talk turned to the examinations.

The matron of a vocational school usually goes to the hostel at about two o'clock—the time when lessons or practice work come to an end. There is supposed to be one matron for every hundred boys. This particular school had a hundred and fifty living in the hostel. By strict calculations this would mean a matron and a half, but as the Labour Reserve Department has a liking for round figures, Vera Ivanovna had the whole hundred-and-fifty.

She spent her first morning on an inspection tour of the hostel. None of the boys were there. She examined the rooms, peered into the night-tables and looked at the sheets and towels to make sure they were clean, jotting down notes in a little book: "Room 3. Hygienic condition satisfactory." "Room No. 7. Food in a drawer."

"What is this?" she sternly asked the care-taker who was going round with her.

His kind old eyes narrowed in a half smile as he peered down at the package which she had spread out accusingly on the table.

"This?" he echoed. "Bacon, isn't it? Good stuff, that. His folks must have killed a pig for Easter."

"That's not what I'm asking you. Food must not be kept in these drawers; it's not hygienic."

"Yes, but you see, Pa and Ma don't know about all that," said the old man silyly. "They're sort of old-fashioned, they just say to themselves: here's our boy away from home, let's send him a parcel. So when they kill a pig, they smoke a bit or make some sausage—" the old man's mouth actually watered at the thought—"and send it along to the boy. And so then, of course, you get all sorts of unhygienic things like this."

"I shall take steps to put an end to it," said Vera Ivanovna, as she replaced the package in the drawer. "The rooms must be kept in perfect order. Whose drawer is that?"

"Funtikov's," said the care-taker.

When the boys arrived, Vera Ivanovna was standing on the landing in trim rubber boots and a neat, in fact dressy, overall.

They clattered in talking noisily.

"Boys, boys, come up quietly, one at a time," she called out. "Stop that rowdiness! The room monitors will come straight to me."

The room monitors gathered round her, and she told them to bring everybody to the recreation-room at once. Very soon the room was filled with boys all curious to know what the new matron was like.

Vera Ivanovna stood behind a small table. She tapped a water-jug with her pencil for silence.

"I have here," she announced, "the names of the boys whose beds or bedside tables are in an unsatisfactory condition. You are all aware that cleanliness is essential for health. And your health is a matter which concerns your country. It is your duty to care for it. . . ."

"What is your name, please?" asked a boy at the back.

"Now with regard to daily occupations," continued the matron, frowning sternly as though the question were an impropriety. "I do not intend to tolerate any laxness or loafing. Every day when you return from the classrooms or workshops you will gather here and one of you will read aloud the most important items in the papers. This is compulsory. With regard to the evenings. . . ."

Much that she said was in its essence correct. People really should go up and down stairs quietly without pushing each other. Good health actually does depend on cleanliness. The country most certainly is interested in having healthy citizens. One ought to read the papers. . . . But for some reason, with every word she spoke the boys' faces became longer and their eyes duller. Her moralizing, her naggingly didactic tone filled them with a mingled sense of boredom, dull acquiescence and suppressed rebellion. These might seem to be widely differing and incompatible feelings, but they rose in that order and merged into one.

Unfortunately, Vera Ivanovna had a great fund of energy. She was determined to confine everything that happened in the hostel within a framework of rules and regulations. The old tales sometimes tell us of good fairies who with a touch of the wand made flowers spring up and everything glow with colour and people laugh with happiness. Vera Ivanovna's effect was the exact reverse. When she entered one of the rooms in her smart overall and rubber boots, laughter fell silent, smiles were banished and talk died. She never chatted with the boys, she delivered speeches, each one neatly labelled with its theme.

She walked in, laid a notebook and two or three pamphlets on the table, poured out a glass of water and commenced.

"Today, boys, we will talk about comradesly help. Listen to what famous men have said or written on this subject. . . ."

For about ten minutes, consulting her notebook and pamphlets, Vera Ivanovna informed the boys of the opinions of famous men on the subject of comradesly help. Then gathering up her educational aids, she concluded: "So you see, boys, it is quite wrong to prompt one another at lessons. . . . Has anybody any questions?"

Nobody had.

"Does anybody wish to speak on this subject?"

Nobody did.

Vera Ivanovna proceeded to the next room, sat down at the table and poured out a glass of water.

"Today we will talk about the sense of duty. . . ."

For ten minutes she read out the opinions of famous men on the subject of duty, and concluded: "So you see, boys, that it is your duty to get only good or excellent marks."

Again there were no questions, again nobody wanted to add anything.

Vera Ivanovna's system of rules and regulations broke down, as always happens, at the most unexpected moment.

She had soon noticed that the boys often wrote home and waited eagerly for letters; this too she decided to put on an organized basis. She appointed special days and time for letter-writing. There it was, neatly down in the time-table—on Tuesdays and Fridays, from eight to nine in the evening, the whole hostel sat down to write home. She felt a lofty moral satisfaction in this new perfection of organization and discipline.

It did not last long—a week, to be exact. On the eighth day Matvei Grigoryevich strolled into the hostel in the evening, sat talking to his boys for a while, then went to look for Vera Ivanovna. He found her putting up posters in the recreation-room.

He shut the door before he spoke.

"Vera Ivanovna," he said quietly, "the boys are upset. . . ."

The matron turned. Without removing the tacks from her mouth, she asked through clenched teeth: "What is the matter, Matvei Grigoryevich?"

"It's about the letter-writing, Vera Ivanovna. A thing like that — after all, it's their own private affair when they write home. . . ."

"Private affairs are, however, interlinked with the life of the individual as a social being. You ought to know that, Matvei Grigoryevich."

"I'm quite well aware of it, thank you," said the instructor. "But I consider it a mistake to link them forcibly. Suppose I, for instance, wanted to write to a girl. . . ."

"Your girls have nothing to do with me," the matron interrupted, spitting the tacks out into her hand.

He glanced at the poster which she had just put up. It showed a handsome man with a moustache. Underneath were the words:

I KEEP MY MONEY IN THE SAVINGS BANK.

I GAIN BY IT AND SO DOES THE STATE.

"Vera Ivanovna," laughed the instructor, "our boys haven't any savings!"

She gave him a cold stare. "How am I to understand that?"

"Any way you like," snapped Matvei Grigoryevich, losing patience. "What I've got to say is this: my boys are not going to do their letter-writing Tuesdays and Fridays from eight to nine. I hope you understand that much!"

He turned and marched out of the room.

Letter-writing hours were abolished. But Vera Ivanovna continued thinking up new rules, new organized activities.

One evening she arranged for the militiaman on their beat to give a lecture in the recreation-room on the penalties for various crimes. The boys were informed of the exact punishment provided by the Criminal Code for arson, robbery, banditry and rowdiness.

The lecture over, Vera Ivanovna asked if there were any questions. The militiaman sat there in his uniform, a revolver at his belt. The Criminal Code lay before him on the table.

"Any questions?" asked Vera Ivanovna again. "Hurry up, hurry up, boys!"

"I have a question," Petya Funtikov raised his hand. He was standing close by the door.

"That's right, let's have it, Kharitonov," said Vera Ivanovna encouragingly (she never could remember the boys' names). "I welcome active interest. Come up here to the table."

"I can ask from here," said Funtikov, frowning. But the boys were making way for him and somebody gave him a push from behind. He advanced to the table, head thrust forward—looking rather like a young bullock that badly wants to toss somebody but does not quite know how to set about it.

He went straight to Vera Ivanovna and, ignoring her sign that he should turn and face the audience, asked grimly: "Why do we have to listen to a lecture like this?"

"What do you mean?" the matron literally jumped.

"Who and what d'you think we are?"

"Vocational school pupils," she gasped.

"If we're ordinary, decent vocational school pupils, why d'you have to drag him in?" said Funtikov, with a jerk of his head towards the lecturer.

Vera Ivanovna had already recovered from her first startled alarm.

"Be careful what you say, Kharitonov!" she snapped angrily.

The militiaman blinked uncertainly and looked at the boys. Funtikov's words had opened the valve, and there was already a good deal of talk and gesticulation. Seryozha Boikov placed two fingers in his mouth and emitted a piercing whistle. The militiaman slipped the Criminal Code into his pocket and went towards the door, the boys willingly making way for him.

"This is outrageous!" shouted Vera Ivanovna, half choking with rage. "Instigators and connivers, two steps forward! Room monitors, come straight to me!"

A roar of laughter was the only reply. Jostling one another, the boys poured out of the room, leaving Vera Ivanovna standing alone under her savings bank poster.

The next day Vasili Yakovlevich sent for her.

"What happened yesterday?" he asked.

She told him about the disgraceful conduct of the boys. She had written down the names of the instigators. The whole thing had been started by Kharitonov of room 5.

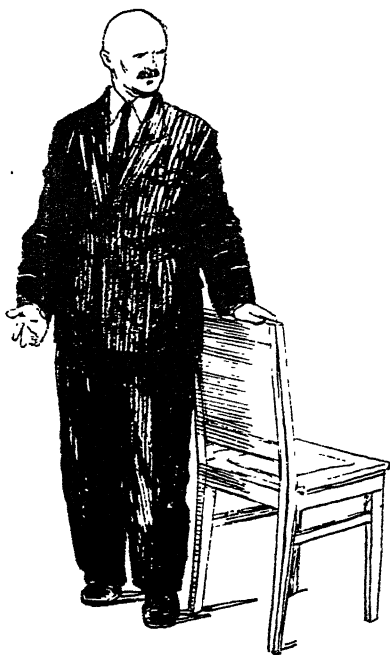
"Funtikov, of the seventh," Vasili Yakovlevich corrected her. "Now tell me, please, how are you getting on with the boys in general?"

"Our relations are perfectly right and proper. They are founded on mutual understanding."

Vasili Yakovlevich frowned, then leaned over the table, his head cocked a little to one side.

"Vera Ivanovna, why do you wear your rubber boots in the hostel?"

"That is hardly a question of principle," the matron flared up. "I am sufficiently neatly dressed not to merit a rebuke about my boots."



"M'yes. . . I beg your pardon," the assistant director sighed wearily. "Boots—that's a minor matter. It is not boots that make man. . . ."

"If you do not find me suitable for my position, I can resign. . . family troubles can serve as the ground. . . ."

"I don't quite know what to say," answered Vasili Yakovlevich.

He rose and went over to the window. An unpleasant sleet had begun falling, and dull grey clouds covered the sky; for an instant it almost seemed as though this young woman and the weather had some intangible connection. Before she came in Vasili Yakovlevich had had everything he intended to say clear in his mind, but now a depressing sense of the futility of any words weighed him down. He actually found it difficult to look at her, the dislike she aroused was so keen.

"Please don't be offended at what I'm going to say, Vera Ivanovna," he said speaking from behind her. "Sometimes people drift into work which they don't really like, and then they work badly. . . . And I think you don't really like educational work—am I not right?"

"If rowdies are encouraged in your school, I am not to blame for that," she answered, without turning.

Vasili Yakovlevich kept his temper.

"Well. . . ." He went back to his table.

"We can do one of two things—part company without argument, or make our farewells prolonged, so to speak. . . ."

"That is quite unnecessary," the matron shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "According to the Labour Code, an employee can leave after a fortnight's notice to the employer. I shall hand in my application to the secretary."

She rose.

"Sit down!" said the assistant director sharply.

Highly offended, she obeyed. Vasili Yakovlevich forced himself to look at her face, but seeing the plucked eyebrows, turned away again.

"What has the Labour Code got to do with all this!" groaned the assistant director. "Are you quite incapable of understanding what I'm talking about? Have you no interest



at all in hearing the school's estimation of your work as an educator? In my opinion, for instance, it would be wiser for you to think of choosing some other kind of work. Or if you really want very much indeed to continue with this one. . . ."

"I have not come in here to be insulted," and Vera Ivanovna rose again, very decidedly. Vasili Yakovlevich rose too.

"On second thoughts, I believe this really is a case for keeping only to the law. I've noticed already, by the way, that the worse a person works, the better acquainted he is with all the details of the Labour Code."

She went to the door, then turned back.

"The form, then, will be that I resign?"

"At the earnest desire of the pupils and administration."

When the door had finally closed behind her, Vasili Yakovlevich thought glumly that in the recommendation he would have to write, he could not, unfortunately, say bluntly: "Tactless and stupid. Quite unsuitable for educational work." It was not done. Instead of being brutally plain, he would have to think out something long and involved out of which the Board would certainly draw the conclusion that Vera Ivanovna could quite well learn to work in this field if she tried hard.

For a week there was no matron. Olga Nikolayevna was expected back any day. And although Vasili Yakovlevich or the Comsomol secretary Antonina Vasilyevna made a practice of coming to the hostel in the evenings, the boys were vaguely conscious that something intangible but very important was missing in their lives.

They lounged about their rooms after lessons, lights were not put out at the proper time, they had pillow-fights, and they let everything get filthy. The old care-taker expostulated, shouted himself hoarse, lost his temper, and even pulled Seryozha Boikov's ear when the boy left the boiler tap running. Seryozha was not in the least offended—he came running back to the room to display his crimson ear.

"Hey! Lads! Grandad's just pulled my ear!"

"Tell us another," said Senya Voronchuk.

"It's true! Here, touch it—it's still hot. . . ."

Mitya obeyed, then Senya too carefully examined Seryozha's ear.

"This won't do, fellows," said Senya sternly. "I'll have to speak to the old man very seriously. As Comsomol organizer. . . ."

"Speak to him? What about?" asked Seryozha.

"Make it clear . . . he can't do that kind of thing."

"But there's nothing to it. . . . I didn't turn off the tap, the hot water ran all over the floor, so he pulled my ear. Quits. What's there in that? You'd get more from your father. . . ."

"A father's another matter."

"And if I haven't got one? If I've no parents and never have had—can't anyone touch me, then?" asked Seryozha, highly offended. "I've as much right to it as any of the rest of you!"

"He insulted your dignity as a member of the Comsomol."

"I don't feel it's insulted! I was even rather sorry for him, I wanted to pretend it hurt a lot more than it did. . . ."

"You have no self-respect." Senya shrugged his shoulders. "All the same, I shall have to speak to the old man."

He went to the care-taker, but was very soon back again. He had nothing to tell about what had been said and how, but looked morose

and upset. It was only some time later that he referred obliquely to the affair.

"We'll have to find someone to help the old man with his duties, otherwise he will get himself into trouble."

At last Olga Nikolayevna returned.

Mitya and Seryozha entered the hostel after lessons and stopped in surprise at the door of their room. The beds were all pushed together in one corner, night-tables were up on the window-sills, and some woman was busy washing the floor, her back to them.

"I say," said Seryozha, "why are you doing that just now, when we're all here?"

She made no reply but continued scrubbing away as though trying to rub a hole in the boards. Mitya flung his satchel of books on the table and went round to the side.

"Oh!" he cried. "It's you, Olga Nikolayevna! Good afternoon!"

"Good afternoon."

"Did you come back today?"

"Yes."

"All sorts of things have been happening while you were away!"

"I know."

"We've been all alone for the last week."

"So I see."

Never before had the boys heard Olga Nikolayevna speak so curtly, so coldly. They exchanged glances.

"Did you have a nice time with your daughter?" asked Seryozha ingratiatingly.

"Yes, thank you."

"So now you're a grandmother?"

"Yes."

"But why are you washing the floor?" asked Mitya, taking the bull by the horns. "Let us help you. . . ."

"No, thanks, I'll finish it myself."

She picked up the pail of dirty water and carried it out past them to the wash-room.

"I'm going to send for the sanitary inspector; let him fine me a hundred roubles!" she said as she passed. "And I shall tell the director to give me a written reprimand!"

Other boys were now standing by their doors and in the corridor; they pressed back against the walls in embarrassment, making way for their matron as she passed with skirts pinned up, carrying the pail.

"Welcome back, Olga Nikolayevna," some of them said.

"Thank you," she answered briefly as she passed.

"She's still got her best clothes on," one boy remarked as she disappeared into the wash-room.

"What's that about a reprimand?" roared Petya Funtikov suddenly. "It's we who've mucked up the place—why should she have to answer for it?"

"That's quite correct," said Kolya Belykh. "For instance, if I spoil a part—I'm the one to blame."

"And what's she spoiled?"

"She's responsible for our upbringing."

"So if an ass like you comes along, somebody else has to answer for you?"

"That's the rule."

"And what about yourself, haven't you any gumption of your own?"

Kolya had no time to answer, because at that moment Olga Nikolayevna passed on her way back with a pail of clean water. No further word was spoken, but as though on some concerted signal, the boys all disappeared. Pails, basins and cloths appeared from nowhere, and great was the spring-cleaning in that hostel!

In the evening, when everything was fresh and shining, Olga Nikolayevna disappeared into the care-taker's room, did her hair, ironed out her crumpled dress, and appeared again in the corridor as though she had only just arrived. She went round the rooms, greeting the boys and saying a few words to each. They followed her lead and acted as though they had not seen their matron that day.

Before Olga Nikolayevna went away, Mitya had never thought about her very much. She was simply a part of his life in the hostel—so familiar as to be unnoticed. But now, when she came in, smiling and motherly, put her hand on Seryozha Boikov's shoulder and said: "Well, tell me how you've been getting along without me," Mitya suddenly felt he wanted her to put her hand on his shoulder and smile at him too. And as though she read his thoughts, she stroked his head as though he were a little boy and asked: "What does your mother write from home?"

For no reason except his gladness at her return, Mitya burst out laughing.

"Oh, Olga Nikolayevna, we're so glad you're back!"

Chapter Eight

The rest of examination time seemed to fly. You got up on Monday morning—and before you knew where you were, it was Sunday again. Every day, too, had its special event which you awaited impatiently. It might not concern you personally, but your own affairs and those of the group had already become so intermingled as to be indistinguishable.

Take Kostya Nazarov's re-examination after that fail, for instance. One might have said it was no concern of Mitya Vlasov's—at least, nothing to prevent him from going back to the hostel after lessons. But not only Mitya, the whole group remained behind.

Three people were in the classroom—the technology teacher, the instructor Matvei Grigoryevich and Kostya. Outside in the corridor, Mitya stood with his head against the door. He peered through the keyhole, put his ear to it, and tried to open the door just a crack without making any noise. About thirty feet away stood another boy, as though waiting for the baton in a relay race; further on was Voronchuk, and so it went—a whole chain reaching down the stairs and into the cloak-room where the rest of the group was waiting.

Mitya listened at the keyhole for a second and reported in a loud whisper.

"He's gone to the board."

The five words went down the chain to the cloak-room.

"Picked up a nut and slide-gauge," whispered Mitya. Down in the cloak-room one of the boys' hands curved involuntarily as though holding the nut and slide-gauge himself.

"Ivan Lukich is smiling," Mitya said (Ivan Lukich was the technology teacher) and everybody wondered why—because of some very stupid answer, or because of a good one? Mitya's disjointed and sometimes perplexing messages were exasperating. Back went the words: "Make it clear, damn you!" In his absorption Mitya was ready to transmit them into the classroom, and only the utter impossibility of the thing prevented him from doing so.

Silence reigned in the corridor, and Mitya plainly heard the question: "What does 'margin of tolerance' mean?"

Down the stairs went the question. Everybody waited breathlessly for what would come next. But all they got was the riddle: "He's wiping his forehead."

Who was wiping his forehead? If it was Kostya that wasn't bad. But if it was Ivan Lukich, it was about as bad as it could be. There's little hope if it's so hard to drag out answers that the teacher actually perspires.

When at last the classroom door opened, Mitya made a dash—not for Kostya or the teacher, but for the instructor Matvei Grigoryevich.

"What's he got?"

Down the stairs went the exam result—no longer along the chain, but in a glad shout: "Through! With a merit!"

Matvei Grigoryevich appeared quite calm, as he always did. But as soon as he was outside the classroom he finished a cigarette in four puffs. And it was he who had wiped his forehead. . . .

In the year that had passed, Matvei Grigoryevich had had to stand more than a little from Nazarov, or, to be more exact, not from him, but because of him. He occupied a most unpleasant limelight—at Party meetings, Comsomol meetings, teachers' meetings and parents' meetings. Other boys were mentioned too, of course, but somehow Nazarov's name always seemed to be in the air, even if it were not pronounced.

Matvei Grigoryevich was one of the youngest members of the Communist Party group at the school. This may have been the reason why he had such a painfully keen sense of responsibility—a feeling that he and no other was to blame, that he must answer for Kostya Nazarov's conduct. His most important duty as a Communist was the education of his pupils. And so far he had not been able to cope with it to the full. There was Kostya. Had he handled the boy wrongly at the very beginning of the year—let him get away with too much?

Matvei Grigoryevich well knew the great importance of the right start with a new group. He loved that sharp sense of alert expectation when he went into a classroom or hostel-room filled with new boys whom he, a young instructor, was to mould and guide for the next two years.

At first glance they all looked alike—a crowd of crop-headed youngsters, awkward in their unaccustomed uniforms, bashful in their new surroundings. Who could say which of them would be better, which worse? And that in itself was not something fixed and stable—there were boys who started off excellently and then disappointed him, and others who pulled up only after some time.

The boys were just as alert for the first impression of their instructor—that Matvei Grigoryevich also knew. His behaviour in the first few days might well be decisive for his authority. They tested him like metal—for strength and resilience. And boys being what they are, they would most certainly notice any weakness first of all. There must therefore be no weakness, particularly in the beginning.

He must become a necessary part of their lives, they must learn to turn to him not only in the workshop, not only with questions about work, but with everything that was important to them. If a boy did not talk to his instructor about what he heard from home, what things were like there, and how he pictured his coming life—that instructor might teach him a trade, but would do little to make him one of those who are really building the future.

There was only one road to his goal—it was paved with love and faith: a real love for these boys, so widely different, so hard to fathom in those first days, and faith that they would become really valuable people, the kind the country needs.

When Matvei Grigoryevich called out some lad who had misbehaved and the lad was stubborn, or impudent, or even refused to do as he was told, the young instructor might lose his temper, he might wish with all his heart to give the young rascal a clout over the head, but all the time he was absolutely certain that the boy would turn out all right in the end.

It was this faith that kept him going. Without it no good educator could work a single day.

He was probably happiest in the workshop. It was not only that the boys were all too busy and interested to get into mischief; he enjoyed the feeling that it was he, Matvei Grigoryevich, who was teaching them all this useful work.

It was not so very long since he himself, crop-headed, awkward and clumsy, had bent over a vice trying with all his might to use the file as the instructor had said.

How difficult it had been in those days! It was hard to conceive now that he could have spent six hours struggling with the making of calipers. What a time he had had before he got them right! Perhaps it was just because Matvei Grigoryevich had such a vivid memory of all this that he was able to explain every detail so patiently to his boys.

It had been far from easy when he first began working. Many a time, telling the boys to do this or that, it suddenly flashed through his mind: But what if they don't obey me? What shall I do then? He always had the feeling that there was something he did not know, something important he had omitted, something he had forgotten.

It sometimes happened that after he had got home in the evening and taken off his outdoor things, he would be seized with a vague apprehension and would hurry back to the school. Only when he had the boys actually under his eye, was his mind really at ease.

Gradually they took on individuality and no longer looked alike. He could give Petya Funtikov any job in the most casual, matter-of-fact way and know that it would be done. With Mitya Vlasov, however, it was better to emphasize the importance of the job in question. Senya Voronchuk liked to do things directly connected with his Comsomol work. Seryozha Boikov was apt to be scatter-brained; a touch of sternness did no harm

when giving him instructions, or a hint that if they were not carried out properly he would be letting down his instructor.

Coming back to teach in the school where so many had known him as a pupil did not make it any easier for him. And to add to his early troubles his voice had little depth or resonance—in fact it was almost a tenor.

Many of the older instructors used the familiar “thou” in talking to him, while he used the respectful “you” to them; he caught himself wanting to stand up when they addressed him. It took a little while to accustom himself to being addressed by name and patronymic. The one piece of good luck was that he was tall, otherwise in his uniform overcoat he might well have been taken for one of the boys.

Now Matvei Grigoryevich could smile at the memory of those early days when in a desperate effort to efface his youthful appearance he stood before the mirror practising a grim look and a menacing frown, which were to show the boys that if they tried any tricks with him they would find they had made a mistake.

One day Vasili Yakovlevich, meeting him in the corridor, took his arm, silently led him into the office and turned the key in the door.

“Well then, instructor,” he said, as though continuing a conversation already started, “so you’re finding it a bit of a tough job, eh?”

“No, it’s all right, thanks.”

“Let’s have straight talk.” Vasili Yakovlevich sounded angry. “Work’s never easy. Especially work done well. . . . But that wasn’t what I was wanting to ask you about. Why are you going about looking sour? Are you ill, or what?”

“No, there’s nothing wrong with me,” said Matvei Grigoryevich. “Maybe you don’t like your work—eh?”

“Why d’you say that?” asked the instructor indignantly. “If I didn’t like it, I wouldn’t have taken it on!”

“Well, if you like it, then look as though you liked it. Look cheerful. You’re going about as though you’d got the worst job in the world.”

“No—it’s not that. . . .” The young man hesitated, embarrassed. “But I’m so awfully young, Vasili Yakovlevich.”

“Oho—so that’s the trouble!” Vasili Yakovlevich laughed. “It’s to give you more weight, is it? The angrier you look the more they’ll respect you? . . . Don’t you fool yourself—they can see you’re just pretending. There’s nothing they don’t see, make no mistake about that. Boys. . . ! Have you forgotten your own days here?”

He reached out and rumbled the instructor’s hair exactly as he had done in those old days he recalled, then became serious. “Remember, Matvei Grigoryevich,” the assistant director went on, “they’ll respect you not for the look on your face, but for your ability to teach, and for the kind of person you are inside. And until they’ve got to your real self, until they learn to trust you and believe in you, you can go about as grave and dignified as a professor but they won’t really respect you. That’s how boys are made. . . .”

That was all a long time ago, and Matvei Grigoryevich could afford to smile at the memory. Of all things—to practise grimaces before the mirror! . . .

That was no way to win boys. Books, though—they helped a lot. He remembered how shamed he had been more than once during his first year

teaching. . . . He would go to the hostel in the evening and find an argument in progress.

"Let's ask Matvei Grigoryevich," someone would cry. "Matvei Grigoryevich, what do you think. . . ." And then it would start—which of the characters in a book they had just read was right? Now how could he admit that he had never seen the confounded book? So he would try to evade an answer.

"It's a bit complicated, boys. Depends on the way you look at it. . . ."

"Yes, but all the same, Matvei Grigoryevich! . . ."

Even to remember it made him uncomfortable. He could leave the room hot under the collar, and as he closed the door someone would say: "He's never even read it! Sticks out a mile!"

Once a week he went to the old librarian who had known him since he was fourteen. In his school days she had always had a soft spot for him, and when he came in now she made a fuss of him, had him sit down in her realm at the back between the tall bookshelves and asked him with motherly interest about all the details of his life. Very often, going back to an old custom, she would pull a sweet out of the pocket of her knitted jacket and hold it out to the instructor.

"Here. . . . Now none of your nonsense, you mustn't offend an old woman!"

She was probably the only person with whom Matvei Grigoryevich could feel a boy again without a particle of embarrassment. She selected books for him, told him what the lads were reading and what new books had come out. She gave him the latest magazines, marking in the index what he ought to read first.

He liked sitting here between the high bookshelves and listening to Maria Vasilyevna's quiet voice. But about once a year she would complain bitterly, looking sulky and injured like a little girl.

"They put down only eight thousand a year. . . . The director signed the estimates yesterday. I told him—'Victor Petrovich, I have six hundred boys.' And he said—'We've all got six hundred, Maria Vasilyevna.' I told him—'All right, and if with all the tools you've got you're short of just one machine, you'll go as far as the Council of Ministers to get it. And aren't Pushkin and Sholokhov just as important as hack-saws? . . . ' So then he said—'You look at it the wrong way.' And I told him—'If I've started looking at things the wrong way, Victor Petrovich, you'd better discharge me.' And he just laughed. 'We're all too fond of you for that,' he said. What good's that to me? What I want is books."

"I'll speak to him about it," Matvei Grigoryevich promised.

She looked at him affectionately but dubiously—of course the director would not take any notice of a boy like that, but it was kind of him to try. The young instructor caught her look.

"I'll take it up at the Party meeting," he concluded firmly.

He actually did manage to get an additional sum set aside for the purchase of books. From then onwards Maria Vasilyevna treated him as an adult who could help her in case of need. And now it was the instructor who often brought sweets in his pocket for the old librarian, knowing her weakness for them.

At first hesitantly, then with growing boldness Matvei Grigoryevich began to make his voice heard in the affairs of the school. He liked the wide horizons of his work and felt with youthful ardour that there could be

no more interesting work anywhere than that of instructor in a vocational school. He always had to be well-informed about everything going on in the world, for there was no limit in number or subject to the questions which thirty enquiring young minds would think up for their instructor.

At Party meetings and teachers' meetings no one was surprised at seeing this still youthful Communist throw off all shyness and enter into arguments with mature, experienced people, resolutely presenting his own point of view.

It was after a Party meeting some time before the "Lightning Flash" incident that Kostya Nazarov was put into his group.

At this meeting Andrei Trifonovich Zavyalov, the elderly instructor who had once upon a time taught Matvei Grigoryevich, reported on Kostya's work. The old man had been struggling with him for six weeks already and was thoroughly exasperated with him.

"With regard to Nazarov," he said, "this isn't the first time we have to talk about him. The teachers know him, so does the Comsomol, and so does the director. It wasn't for nothing that he was expelled from two schools before he came here. He seems to be absolutely incorrigible. The Comsomol has tried to put some sense into him; they've reasoned with him, persuaded him—everything you could think of. I want you to know how matters stand, so that you won't be surprised if I can't make anything much out of him."

"Andrei Trifonovich," said Matvei Grigoryevich, nervous but resolute, "I think you're wrong there."

The grey-headed instructor looked at his former pupil, bit his lip, then said half mockingly: "Well, if I'm wrong, put me right. I taught you for two years, now you can teach me."

Matvei Grigoryevich rose, his face crimson.

"I don't think we have the right to throw off all responsibility like that. What does it lead to? At the beginning of the year every instructor announces that he won't answer for this or that pupil. . . . And the teachers can do the same. As it is we often get into arguments about who is responsible for the boys' behaviour at the lessons. If a boy behaves well the teacher takes the credit, if the boy behaves badly he says the instructor is responsible for him. . . . And actually putting the question like that at all is both incorrect and harmful. We're all responsible. . . ."

"H'm—a lot you have to worry about this Kostya Nazarov of mine," Andrei Trifonovich snorted.

"Of course, I'm worried about him," said Matvei Grigoryevich indignantly. "I respect you very highly, Andrei Trifonovich, and I'm grateful to you. . . ."

But he had no chance to conclude; the old instructor was thoroughly offended with his former pupil and growled to nobody in particular: "Big talk's easy. He'd sing a different tune if he got a specimen like Nazarov himself."

"I'm not talking big," said Matvei Grigoryevich. "If I got him, I'd train him."

"Well, take him, then, if you want him so badly. I'll only say thank you. . . ."

In the heat of argument the young instructor did not realize to the full the weight of the burden he was taking on his still immature shoulders.

Some days later the director and his assistant discussed the matter, sent for Matvei Grigoryevich, and finally transferred Kostya to his group.

Beneath his outward calm, the instructor sometimes felt desperate. He tried every possible "key" to Kostya, but in vain. Sometimes he would go home after talking to the boy, sure that Kostya had understood at last, and would begin to improve. But before a week had passed, there would be more trouble with him—usually at one of the theoretical lessons.

Matvei Grigoryevich could not enter the teachers' room without somebody coming up with a complaint.

"Look here, I've had just about as much as I can stand from that Nazarov of yours."

"When are you going to put some sense into your Nazarov? Oh yes, I know—you'll say he's not yours, he belongs to all of us. . . ."

He would have to listen to how Nazarov had upset his neighbour's ink; how he had lost all his exercise-books; how he whistled during lessons; how he refused to move when the teacher at last told him to leave the class.

The instructor spoke long and sternly to Nazarov after lessons. Kostya willingly wrote a letter of apology to the teacher, to the director—he would write them to anybody; what did he care? He accurately listed all his misdemeanours. Yes, he had spilled ink over Nosov's tunic. Yes, he had whistled "Too early to die" in class. He had torn up his exercise-books. He had not left the classroom when the teacher told him to do so. He promised not to act in this way again. Signature.

He had written about a dozen letters of this kind.

The instructor made him apologize before the group. This was rather less easy for Kostya. When it was time to leave the workshop, Matvei Grigoryevich had the boys form up in lines, and his frowning face told them that this was not for any pleasant announcement; there was something ominous in the air. He did not come up to the line as he usually did, but stood waiting beside his little office in the corner. After a few moments of this the boys began to fidget; he raised his head and looked at them; there was instant silence, broken only by Senya Voronchuk's barely audible whisper: "Go on, go out in front! How long do we have to stand here for you?"

Kostya Nazarov slowly sauntered out in front of the line. He had a complex psychological problem to solve. To the boys he must put on a bold front, as though all this was just a bit of nonsense that he found rather ridiculous; he must make the instructor think him sincerely repentant; and finally he must convince himself that although he did not feel entirely happy, it had nothing to do with the present occasion.

Matvei Grigoryevich was behind him and could not see his face. Standing before the line, Kostya drew upon the last of his boldness for an indifferent smile.

"I misbehaved today," he said in a voice which he tried to make contemptuously mocking, but which only sounded depressed.

"In what way?" asked Matvei Grigoryevich sharply.

"Oh, they know all about it."

"Stop. Start again."

"I misbehaved today," Kostya repeated. "I was rude to the mathematics teacher. . . . Also, I was absent for three days and lied to the instructor. . . . I promise to behave better in future. . . ."

That over and done with, he could breathe freely.

But once it all ended differently.

On this occasion Kostya was particularly reckless. The instructor was standing behind him, weary and angry at his own helplessness, and Kostya, apologizing to the group, not only smiled impudently but put out his tongue at Seryozha. Matvei Grigoryevich could see from the boys' faces that Nazarov had done something outrageous, but on this day the young instructor was particularly depressed by a sense of pedagogical impotence and pretended to see nothing. To pay attention would have compelled him to take steps, but what steps to take he simply did not know. His face was drawn and haggard from his gloomy thoughts.

When Kostya finished his clowning, the instructor wearily told the monitor to take the group to the canteen. But Funtikov—Funtikov the reliable—instead of obeying, hesitated a moment, then went resolutely up to the instructor.

"Matvei Grigoryevich," he said softly. "You go to the canteen . . . please . . . and we'll follow on."

Had this been any other time Matvei Grigoryevich would probably have been angry with the monitor, but now he nodded indifferently and went out into the corridor. As soon as the door closed behind him, he heard the click of the lock. Slowly he descended the stairs, went into the teachers' room and stood staring at the time-table. He did not want to look at the other instructors—they all seemed so gay and pleased with life. Old Andrei Trifonovich came up and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well—how's things, Matvei?"

"All right, thanks."

"How do you like my present?"

"What d'you mean?" asked the young man, although he knew very well what was meant.

"Oh, don't try to wriggle out of it," laughed the old instructor. "I can see by your face. You're wishing you hadn't talked so big. You'll be coming to me yet and begging: 'Andrei Trifonovich, take your Kostya back again!'"

"No, I shan't," said Matvei Grigoryevich.

"Oho—you don't want to go back on your word, is that it? . . . But all the same, how's he behaving? A stinker—eh?"

"No, I wouldn't say so. I can't complain. . . ."

"You don't say?" said the old man sceptically and walked away.

Hearing the clatter of feet on the stairs, the young instructor went out to see his group coming down in an orderly line. He stopped the monitor as they passed.

"Where's Nazarov?"

"He'll come in a minute," said Funtikov, avoiding his instructor's eye.

"He's had his dinner!" Seryozha Boikov called up from below.

The group went on to the canteen, but Matvei Grigoryevich returned to the workshop. At first he thought it was empty, but going further in he noticed Nazarov sitting on the last bench in the corner, his elbow resting on a vice, his head in his hand.

"Nazarov! What are you doing here?" Matvei Grigoryevich called out. Kostya said nothing but only shook his head. The instructor went up to him.

"Go to dinner."

"I don't want any," Kostya answered, his hand still hiding half his face. He got up and tried to pull down his tunic with the other hand.

"Did they beat you?" asked the instructor.

"No, nobody's touched me."

Matvei Grigoryevich removed the boy's hand from his face, disclosing the beginning of a very fine black eye.

"And what's that?"

"I knocked against the door."

"Where's that cap?"

"What cap?"

"The one you took from the fifth group."

"I gave it back. . . . That is, Petya Funtikov gave it back. . . . You can ask him. . . ."

"H'm—he took it from you by force, did he?"

"No—why? He asked me for it and I gave it him."

"And where did you get that bruise?"

"I banged against the edge of the door."

"And why are your clothes all pulled about?"

"I was talking. . . ."

"With whom?"

"The boys . . . Matvei Grigoryevich, may I go home now, please?"

"You go to the doctor first, your eye's pretty badly swollen. . . . Who was it hit you? Funtikov?"

"I fell against the door. . . ."

There was no point in saying any more.

Matvei Grigoryevich understood very well that the boys had dealt with Kostya in their own way; and to be quite honest, he regarded this with mixed feelings. He knew, of course, that a beating, even one administered by public opinion, so to speak, was no proper cure for the trouble. But nevertheless in his heart of hearts, being still young himself, he cherished a secret hope that it might, nevertheless, somehow have a good effect. And being still young, he felt a certain hidden satisfaction that he would have been ashamed to admit to himself; he was already so exasperated, so heartily sick of Kostya Nazarov that he even found a certain justice in the boys' action. At any rate, he did not try to find out any more about it, for fear of being compelled to punish them.

For a week after this, Nazarov behaved himself. But, after all, one really cannot use this kind of "key!"

The more difficult the boy, the more locks there are to his character, thought the instructor. And one of them is the master lock, a secret lock.

The skeleton key Matvei Grigoryevich of course knew—the influence of public opinion on the problem boy. But the advice to use this key is easier given than taken. It is not just a case of—here is the group, there is Nazarov; let the group influence him. It can even happen the other way round—here is a group of good lads, there is Nazarov, and he begins to influence the group. He can be a focus for the worst elements. Is a lad like Nosov very much troubled if Kostya spills ink over his tunic? Not he! The Nosov kind might, just as likely as not, admire Kostya for his boldness. If he can "cheek" a teacher cleverly enough, he will have almost the whole class laughing with him.

There are times when one has to think not so much of straightening out a Nazarov as of protecting the group from his influence.

To make Kostya behave tolerably well in the workshop was pretty easy. All the boys liked the practical work, but the school had to turn out good workers and good citizens, with an all-round general knowledge and a sense of responsibility, people to whose hands the future of the country could be entrusted. Something more than files and milling machines was needed for this.

Matvei Grigoryevich went to Kostya's home and had a talk with his mother. She was a small, thin woman with a hunted look in her eyes, she was alarmed by the instructor's arrival and tried to conceal her apprehension by fussing about and talking continuously, making a great show of surprise.

"Well, of all the things, I'd never have thought it!" she cried, flapping her hands about helplessly. "And at home he's as good as gold, and so kind to his mother, you'd never think! Ask the neighbours if you don't believe me! . . . He always brings in wood without waiting for me to tell him, and chops it, and lights the stove in the mornings. 'You sit down and rest, Mum,' he says. . . . Now just think of it, never telling me he was in trouble at school!"

"Is it long since his father left him?" asked Matvei Grigoryevich. He almost said: "left you," but changed the pronoun at the last moment, fearing to be tactless.

"A long time ago! . . . I had the court looking for him three years. . . . Now at least he pays for the boy's upkeep regularly, thank God. Eh, but he's a scoundrel, there never was a worse. Found himself a young girl and just walked out and left us. Kostya was nine then. He's really a very clever boy, Matvei Grigoryevich! Maybe he's got into bad company at that school?" she asked cautiously. "You know the kind of young roughs you get at vocational schools!"

"I'm afraid I don't," said the instructor curtly. "And I was trained myself in the same school your son is going to now."

"Think of that, now!" She clasped her hands together, frightened but admiring. "So young you are, and already on your feet! And what's your salary, Matvei Grigoryevich?"

Unwillingly he told her. "So you've never noticed any faults in him here at home?" he probed insistently. "Very strange. . . . Wasn't he expelled from school?"

"That was because of his friends, they pushed everything on to him!" she wailed and started crying. "He's a good boy but he's too weak. If he gets into bad company the rest get off and leave him to take the blame. You know what teachers are like nowadays! . . . They've no time to get down to the bottom of everything. It's the quiet ones that can't stand up for themselves, they're always the ones that get blamed for everything."

There was no sense in continuing. The mother had only one fixed idea in her head—that the instructor was unjust to her Kostya. Perhaps she could have understood more, but that would have meant admitting to herself that she had brought her son up badly. Not every mother is capable of this, by a long way.

She was sent for to the school a number of times. She wept in the director's office and in the assistant director's office, with Kostya beside her staring at the floor.

On several occasions she went to Matvei Grigoryevich without ceremony and without waiting for a summons. She tried according to

her own ideas to win him over. One day as she left the workshop she "forgot" a bottle of vodka on his table.

He understood that this was no accidental forgetfulness, and waited for the next parents' meeting. When parents and teachers had all said their say, Matvei Grigoryevich asked to be heard.

First of all he put the bottle of vodka in the middle of the table.

"Look at that," he said. "That was brought to me in the workshop. The mother of one of my pupils wanted to bribe me—with vodka." His voice cracked.

"Who was it?" asked a number of voices.

"That doesn't matter," he answered. "She's not here." He looked very hard at Kostya's mother. "But the point is this—how could a mother entrust the education of her son to an instructor who would take bribes? What is she thinking of? Where has she sent her son? To a Soviet school, or as an apprentice to some cobbler as they used to do once? Has she no shame?" He stopped again, choking and highly indignant.

An old woman whose nephew was in Kostya's group leaned over to Nazarova who was sitting beside her. "What a swine that woman must be!"

Matvei Grigoryevich did not name Nazarova. She had to sit there and listen to everything said about her. She drew her head down as though shrinking from blows; her body seemed to have lost all weight and solidity, it felt light and empty.

Now, how could Matvei Grigoryevich possibly hope for any assistance from Kostya's mother in educating her son?

She was an ignorant woman with an unhappy married life behind her, ready to work but evidently not very much good at it, considering that in the six years since her husband left her she had got no further than being a night watchman.

Slowly, patiently, the instructor felt about for a point of contact with Kostya.

He would have to act through the boys. Kostya never guessed how many Comsomol meetings and group meetings had been called on his account, for there were many to which he was not summoned. He had no idea that when Mitya or Seryozha would come up and start talking to him casually during recess, it was actually because they had been asked by the Comsomol and the instructor to try influencing him.

That was why Seryozha Boikov's hands curved round an imaginary slide-gauge and nut, and Mitya stood tensely by the classroom door when Kostya took his technology exam for the second time. The two of them had coached Kostya for that exam almost by force.

That was why Matvei Grigoryevich wiped his forehead.

Chapter Nine

The whole school was in the throes of preparation for a grand party.

After the first-year boys' exams, an "Old Boys' Day" was always held when former pupils met their youngest successors. For six weeks the director and his assistant had been sending off letters to the most varied addresses, far and near. The replies came in the form of telegrams, letters, postcards, and long-distance telephone calls. Sometimes a stranger would push open the door of the school, march over to the cloak-room

attendant and greet her with: "Good morning, Auntie Pasha!" And his face would glow as though she really were his own aunt.

The Comsomol committee told the organizers in all the groups to have the group meetings choose one or two members each to help with the preparations. A committee of welcome was formed.

Mitya Vlasov and Seryozha Boikov had to deliver an invitation to the director of a Moscow factory. Vasili Yakovlevich handed them beautifully printed invitation cards.

"Remember, get him here, dead or alive," he told the boys. "If worst comes to worst tell him that if he doesn't show up I'll give him a reprimand. But leave that for a last resort, don't frighten him all at once."

Kostya Nazarov was to decorate a big placard bearing the names of old pupils who had distinguished themselves.

Tanya Sozina and Vasya Andronov of the second form had the job of inviting parents; they went personally to the ones living in Moscow, and sent letters to those in other places.

Mitya badly wanted to change over with Andronov and work with Tanya, but nothing came of it. There was no more dictation, so now he saw her only when they happened to meet in the corridors.

One evening the whole school went to the Bolshoi Theatre to hear *Boris Godunov*, and by changing seats three times Mitya did manage to sit in the same row as Tanya.

Before the show began, the boys went round the halls and vestibules of the theatre. On one of these perambulations Mitya happened to catch sight of himself in a huge mirror—and found little satisfaction in it. He did not look in the least as he had imagined himself. He seemed much smaller, and the creases in his trousers which he had carefully pressed under the mattress were not nearly so accurate as they had appeared before he set out. In general, it was better not to linger before that mirror.

The mouldings and the frescoes on the ceilings were beautiful. To Mitya they seemed like natural phenomena—the sky was a real sky with winged infants flying across it, with real fruit and real clouds. He wanted to find Tanya and show her all this, but she had disappeared. It was only when he returned to the auditorium that he saw her again, separated from him by a number of seats. Their places were in the upper circle. He could not tear his eyes from the chandelier—that too seemed some miraculous natural phenomenon, not a dead thing hanging from the ceiling but a fantastic plant called into being by a magician's wand. Of course that's all just nonsense, Mitya told himself, but nevertheless he could not imagine that chandelier being made by ordinary human hands.

He looked at Tanya and wanted to point to the chandelier, but she was gazing at the curtain, and when Mitya looked at it too, Tanya was already admiring the chandelier. Then the light in it very slowly faded and disappeared.

The overture began.

Mitya had never been in a theatre like this in his life. It was as though somebody had taken his hand and led him into a lofty, distant place where each second brought something amazing. It was impossible to conceive beforehand what would happen with you here.

It seemed strange at first that the people on the stage sang instead of talking; he had heard fragments from operas over the radio many a time, of course, but this was different—here people walked about the stage be-

fore his eyes and sang to one another. Sometimes he lost the thread of the plot and might have thought it a little tedious, but there was so much to look at—on the stage and in the auditorium—that there was no chance to be bored, his attention was simply transferred to something else.

Mitya liked the Pretender. When he escaped through the window of the wayside inn, Mitya felt as though he were alongside, hurrying him, urging him, anxious that he should not be caught.

In the interval, after the famous scene by the fountain, Mitya went boldly up to Tanya.

"Let's walk round a bit," he said. Had it not been for the Pretender, he would never have dared it.

They strolled through the lobby, Mitya carefully avoiding that mirror.

"How do you like the chandelier?" he asked.

"Why the chandelier in particular?" asked Tanya, shrugging her shoulders. "We've come to hear *Boris Godunov*."

"Oh—of course," said Mitya, flushing. "But that chandelier's really wonderful, too."

"Nelepp is singing well," said Tanya.

"Why—do you know him?" Mitya wondered.

"No, not a scrap."

"Yes, I like him too," said Mitya. "The Pretender was executed after he usurped the throne."

"I know that myself, thanks," said Tanya. "I *have* learned history."

"How many more days before our party?" asked Mitya, to change the subject.

"Eight."

"I'm going tomorrow to a factory director."

"With a letter?"

"No, why? I have to talk to him personally. . . . Are you going home for the holidays?"

"I don't know. I haven't anybody there now."

"Hasn't Funtikov spoken to you?"

"No—what about?"

"He's asking people to go to his place, Otradnoye."

"What should I go there for?"

"Oh, it's no good trying to talk to you about anything!" Mitya had to shout the last words because the crowd separated them at that moment; and then the third bell went, and they hurried back to their seats.

There was no chance to talk during the next interval, the other lads dragged him away for lemonade, and then they all looked at the photographs of singers and dancers in various roles hanging on the walls.

After the last curtain fell, Mitya found himself going down the stairs beside Tanya. He wished the stairs were longer. He wanted to tell Tanya how much he had liked the theatre, the opera and Nelepp; he wanted to tell her that Funtikov was not inviting people just to come for a visit, that he was asking them to help the collective farm build a power station.

But Tanya went down too fast, through all the general noise Mitya could distinctly hear her heels clicking on each step.

"Have you finished your embroidery?" he asked.

"No, not yet," she answered. "I'm tired of it."

Only two more flights of stairs were left, he could see the boys below gathered round the matron.

"That's a pity," he said. "It's a fine embroidery."

"Do you think so?" Tanya answered, surprised.

Then they were downstairs.

For some time past Seryozha Boikov had noticed something strange about Mitya. A good-natured, high-spirited friend who would listen for hours to the most fantastic tales—and Seryozha loved to make up amazing things—had suddenly become touchy and irritable. He had begun to talk in his sleep, what was more. Instead of sleeping like the dead without stirring, he would murmur and moan, and once pronounced various words and broken phrases.

Everyone was used to the lively nocturnal life of Petya Funtikov. The boys had long ago stopped asking him in the morning where he had been, what he had done in his dreams—particularly as matter-of-fact Petya always made the tale brief, commonplace and uninteresting, so ordinary that it was not like a dream at all. Once upon a time, long ago, in the first nights at the hostel, Funtikov had dreamed of his home, the village, the village school. . . . Now that was something worth while! To lie asleep in Moscow and see the woods at home, to gather mushrooms, to row on the Volga in a leaky boat, to hear the sedge rustling and the wild duck quacking softly—anybody could envy him that! Seryozha even used to pester him to say how he did it.

"Why do you dream about things like that, Petya?"

"How do I know?"

"No, but tell me—maybe you think about something special just before you go to sleep?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe you're a somnambulist?"

"That's something different," said Funtikov, offended. "That's like being a bit touched."

After a month in Moscow, however, Funtikov's gift seemed to leave him. He still tossed and muttered in his sleep sometimes, but even from these disjointed fragments one could tell that all he saw was the classroom or workshop, and the only people he talked to were the teachers or boys he was with all the time. That was not at all interesting. There was plenty of time for it during the day.

With Mitya it all started quite differently. First of all, he cried in his sleep. Seryozha himself heard Mitya sobbing in the night. At first he did not believe his own ears. He listened attentively—yes, there were strange sounds coming from near by, more like weeping than anything else. Seryozha sat up—his head was near Mitya's feet—and peered over the head of the bed. A street-lamp shone in through the window and Seryozha could see that Mitya was either choking or sobbing, his head half under the pillow. Seryozha jumped out of bed, snatched away the pillow, bent down and peered into his friend's face. It was wet with tears.

"What's the matter?" Seryozha asked softly.

Mitya said nothing.

"Mitya, it's me, Seryozha. . . . Has somebody done something to you?"

Again no answer.

Seryozha began to be frightened, he thought the lad was dying, but suddenly Mitya's face broke into a happy smile.

"Hey, stop acting the goat!" whispered Seryozha angrily. "What's up with you—crying and laughing like an idiot. . . ."

He shook his friend's shoulder hard. Mitya opened his eyes and stared muzzily, not understanding why he had been awakened, then hunched over angrily on to the other side and fell asleep again.

Seryozha expected Mitya to say something about it all the next morning, but—not a word. He waited another day. Still no explanation. When the third day came, Seryozha could hold out no longer.

"Look here, Mitya," he said when they were sitting on the boards in the yard after dinner, "this isn't the way to treat a pal; only a dirty tyke would do it. . . ."

"Why—what's up?"

"Oh, don't try it on. I always tell you everything. Why were you crying that night?"

"What d'you mean? When?" Mitya stared.

"Three nights ago. First you started crying, then just as I was going to run for the doctor you burst out laughing like a hyena. Laughing and waving your hands about. You even landed me one on the nose." Seryozha Boikov never could keep strictly to sober facts.

Mitya went crimson.

"I don't remember a thing about it. . . . Did I say anything?"

"Gosh—didn't you!"

"Why—what did I say?"

"You know yourself what you said—I don't need to tell you."

In a hasty attempt to make up what his friend had said in his sleep Seryozha put together such a jumble of nonsense that he could not even believe it himself—and he liked the things he made up to contain enough reality to blend with fact so that he himself could hardly separate them.

Seryozha soon forgot about all this, but he noticed another queer thing—Mitya had become very touchy and irritable. When they were leaving the classroom for recess, for instance, Seryozha reached over and rumpled Mitya's hair; nothing special about that, one would say, but Mitya turned round crimson with rage and started pummelling Seryozha with his fists.

"Here, are you crazy, or what?" asked Seryozha, retreating.

Mitya's only answer was a thump on the chest. Then Seryozha too lost his temper, hunched his body forward as one of the boys at the children's home had taught him and started fighting in earnest. They clinched, then fell down and rolled on the floor. A crowd of boys surrounded them. The girls came running up too. Kostya Nazarov capered round them shouting: "Go on—bash him one! Get back, give them room! Don't stop them, let them finish! . . ."

The girls displayed every sign of disgust—but stayed to watch. Only Tanya Sozina, on learning who were fighting, shrugged her shoulders contemptuously and walked away.

At last Mitya managed to get on top, sitting on Seryozha's stomach, and pressing his outstretched hands down on the floor. What to do next he did not know, for his anger had all evaporated.

"That's not the way to fight, it's a sissy way!" Kostya yelled. "You must go on to first blood!"

Petya Funtikov, who had stood watching the fight silently and with interest, suddenly scooped up Kostya, with surprising agility got his head in chancery and gave his back three soft taps with his clenched fist, saying the while: "Don't egg 'em on . . . don't egg 'em on . . . don't egg 'em on!"

The boys all burst out laughing and Vanya Tikhonov gave Kostya a resounding slap on his inviting rear end for good measure. Even Seryozha on the floor joined in the laughter. Mitya first released Seryozha's arms, then rose shamefacedly and pulled down his tunic. At the sight of the girls his face darkened.

"Of course you've got to come snooping round too! Get out!" he snarled.

"We'll go when we want!" They stalked off with dignity.

The fight was quickly forgotten—except by Kostya, who went about for a long time grumbling that Funtikov had not kept to the rules. It was a village way of fighting to get a fellow's head under your arm, and if Funtikov had fought properly then he, Kostya, would soon have given him one on the snout. Everybody knew, of course, that Funtikov was the strongest in the group, but Kostya talked about special tricks which could throw down even a well-armed man and make him helpless. He pestered everybody to let him show those tricks and went into various contortions from which it was to be understood that if the other party stood quite still and did everything exactly as Kostya wished, then Kostya would most certainly win the fight.

Two days later Mitya went to the library to change a book. Maria Vasilyevna was not to be seen; she was probably somewhere among the shelves at the back. Tanya Sozina and her snub-nosed friend Zina were standing by the counter. Mitya quietly moved up beside them and pretended to be looking down the list of new books. He did read the titles, but they left no impression on his mind. That had begun to happen quite often in Tanya's presence: letters formed words, but the words had no meaning—as though he were watching a man talking but had suddenly gone deaf.

The girls did not notice Mitya and continued talking.

"You ask her," said Zina. "What are you scared of?"

"I'm not scared of anything," Tanya answered. "But it sounds so silly."

"It's not a bit silly. Just ask, that's all. I shan't go away, I'll be right by you. . . . Say—Maria Vasilyevna, give us a book about love."

"But there aren't books just specially about love," Tanya objected.

"There are, I tell you—I've read one myself."

"What was it called?"

"Oh, you know I can never remember names of books."

It was then that Zina noticed Mitya; she put her mouth close to Tanya's ear and whispered excitedly for some time. Mitya moved away so as not to look as though he were listening.

He did not like the idea of Tanya being persuaded to read books about love. In general, he had no use for Zina. She was always whispering, and her face would get as red as a beetroot. . . . He was sensitively alert when



Tanya was near. She had not the slightest idea of all he had done for her sake! . . . Because of her he was always secretly competing with somebody. At the cinema and the theatre he envied the dashing heroes, especially if Tanya was among the audience. That Pretender had sung so well, and he, himself, could not sing at all. . . . Of course that wasn't so important, it was really nothing at all; but he was determined that the hack-saw he was just finishing should be the best in the group and perhaps in the school. And there was Tanya living happily in her room with her stupid Zina, without a care in the world, with never an idea of the efforts which he was making for her sake. Was it very pleasant to go right under the icy shower in a cold wash-room, so early in the morning that it was still quite dark outside? It was not! The other lads just splashed a bit to make a show and scuttled away. . . . And in the gymnasium, when he simply could not do some difficult exercise on the parallel bars, he would think to himself: I'm not doing it for myself, I'm doing it for her—and then he would manage it. . . .

He waited a little distance from the girls, hating the thought that Tanya was getting a book about the loves of other people. He wished that there were no such book in the library. But Maria Vasilyevna was already back again, writing something on Tanya's library card.

"Does it end happily?" Zina asked her. "Do they get married?"

"Read it, and then you'll know," the old librarian answered. "But you've got that foolish habit of looking at the end first, and then reading the beginning."

Mitya marched up to the counter and said loudly: "Books are as much use to them as a saddle to a cow."

"Why—Mitya!" said Maria Vasilyevna in shocked surprise, and shook her grey head reprovingly.

"Oh, you can be thankful he doesn't start fighting," said Tanya scathingly. "People like that make me sick! . . . Come on, Zina. Thank you, Maria Vasilyevna."

So Mitya was left standing there, his arms hanging helplessly, crushed by Tanya's contempt. How haughtily she had passed him, head in air; how low he had fallen in her eyes! . . .

Maria Vasilyevna silently took the books he had brought and ticked them off on his card, stealing a very kindly glance at him.

"Do you like poetry?" she asked.

"I don't know," Mitya answered hoarsely.

"Take my advice and read it. I'm an old woman now, but there's poetry I've known since I was a child, poetry I've always loved. When I was young it helped me, and it helps me now too."

"But how can it help?" asked Mitya.

"I'll choose you a book to read; but you must read it when you can be quiet and nobody disturbs you—and you'll feel easier at once, you'll see."

She scratched something more on the card with her pen, then brought Mitya a volume of Pushkin, saying that she had put ticks in the index by the names of poems which he would certainly like. And then she fumbled in her pocket and gave Mitya a sweet. . . .

The eight days left before the party were busy ones filled with lessons, work in the shops and a thousand preparations.

Mitya and Seryozha went to the factory director to deliver the invitation. It was a warm day, but nevertheless they put on their smart uniform coats. They settled what each was to say, but of course when the time came everything turned out quite otherwise.

Mitya had his sentence off by heart. "On behalf of the administration and the Party and Comsomol organizations we invite you, Stepan Ignatyevich, to an old boys' party given by the pupils of Vocational School 28." Seryozha Boikov was to continue: "As a former pupil at our school we beg you to come. The party begins at 7 p.m." Mitya was then to hold out the beautifully printed invitation card and they would say both together: "With greetings from the school," and go.

A secretary in the outer office asked them to take off their coats and wait a little while.

Mitya sat down with staid dignity on a chair by the wall; Seryozha, however, was somewhat taken aback by the rapid realization of his dream—there was the door of the private office, the board, and the name "S. I. Vavilin, director," and that S. I. Vavilin had been at the same school where Seryozha was training.

After about ten minutes a bell rang, the secretary went in, then came out again.

"Go in, please."

Mitya and Seryozha entered the office.

The trouble was that they had not so much as a second to look round and get their bearings. Mitya took two steps forward and addressed a stout, grey-haired man with a dissatisfied expression, sitting in an arm-chair by the big desk.

"On behalf of the administration and the Party and Comsomol organizations we invite you, Stepan Ignatyevich. . . ."

"I'm Stepan Ignatyevich, boys," said a voice on the left, and Mitya, turning, saw a young man walking up and down.

Instead of starting from the beginning again, Mitya in his embarrassment simply held out the card; Seryozha, lost without his cue, remembered only to say: "It begins at 7 p. m." Together, they concluded: "With greetings from the school."

Stepan Ignatyevich laughed—a jolly laugh.

"Got a bit mixed up—eh?"

"Yes—a bit," said Mitya.

"Turners?"

"We're in the tool-makers' group."

"Well, sit down, tool-makers. How's Victor Petrovich?"

"He's well."

"And Vasili Yakovlevich?"

"He's well too. He told us to get you to the party dead or alive."

"Oh, I'll come, I'll certainly come. I've got some business with him anyway. You haven't heard, have you, what the boys finishing this year are like? A good bunch? Which group's the best?"

"What's the use of asking about the ones finishing this year, Stepan Ignatyevich?" asked the man with the dissatisfied expression—a shift foreman. "They've all been snapped up long ago. We were given thirteen and it's no good hoping for any more. Got to look a year ahead. As for this year's best group, I can tell you that—it's the seventeenth."

"Yes, that's right," Mitya agreed.

"There are some grand milling-machine operators. That—what's his name?—Vasya Andronov, he does seven hundred revolutions at the school workshop, and you can't call them real machines, those things they've got there."

"Why not? They're good machines," said Seryozha, offended on behalf of the milling-machine operators.

"You've never seen real machines, lad," said the shift foreman. "Stepan Ignatyevich, do you mind if I take them round a bit and see what they know—it may come in useful."

The director smiled. "But it'll be another year before they finish."

"That doesn't matter. It's always good to know beforehand. Come along with me, boys."

Still wearing the same dissatisfied look, the shift foreman silently led them through the shops to his own. There were constant stops on the way for various people and affairs. He would leave the boys for "just a moment" and his return might be in a moment or in half an hour.

The boys did not mind.

In the forge shop a huge pneumatic hammer rose and fell on a glowing ingot. Its strokes seemed to be light, gay little taps, and it was strange to see the ingot changing its shape beneath them. A smith in goggles and an apron reaching to the floor skilfully placed the ingot under the hammer with a long pair of tongs, and in the scant seconds when the hammer rose, turned it here and there, presenting its various surfaces. He did it with neat dispatch, a delight to the eye; like all work done without obvious effort, it looked to Mitya quite easy.

Bang! He turned the ingot lengthways. Bang! He turned it crossways. Only bashfulness prevented Mitya from asking the man to give him the tongs and let him try it for a moment.

A giant crane, with no visible effort on the part of the operator, carried a girder high overhead, and again it looked like easy work to guide the machine.

Mitya did not yet know that when one works with absolute accuracy the correct movements become habitual, that what is habitual becomes easy, and that it is this ease of real skill that lends beauty to the job.

When they came to the milling-machine shop, the boys stopped dead in the doorway. The high ceiling was curved like a series of bows, each bow strung tight by a metal rod secured with great bolts. Rows of shining dark metal machines, breathing, moving, stretched away into the distance. The smells of machine oil, hot steel, iron and pig iron all merged into one sharp acrid smell that Mitya sniffed with delight—the smell of work, of his new trade. And although this shop was immeasurably bigger than the school workshop, although Mitya was not a milling-machine learner, he felt as though he had come to the place he had long been seeking, where he would no longer be a boy but a man—mature, needed in the world.

A machine was working close by, behind thick wire netting, showering out sparks in all directions as though angry at being caged in. At first Mitya and Seryozha did not even notice the operator, they only heard the foreman speaking to him, shouting over the noise.

"How much, Alexandr Petrovich?"

"Thousand five hundred so far," answered a high-pitched voice.

Mitya looked in the direction of the voice and saw this Alexandr Petrovich—a lad in his teens, so small that he had to stand on a box to reach the milling spindle. But the foreman addressed him by name and patronymic quite as a matter of course.

"I've done the connecting rods," said the small operator, then with a sudden change to angry irritation: "Look here, Yegor Ivanovich, this won't do. The scribes are letting me down. I was promised thirty blanks by twelve; it's half past and they've only brought me sixteen."

"You've got enough to go on with," said the foreman, pointing at a pile of forgings.

"Enough, you think?" snapped the operator angrily. "I wish to report officially, Yegor Ivanovich, that they are holding me up. Look at the arbour—I'm milling six forgings simultaneously."

"It's not too many?" asked the foreman, examining the arbour with its six forgings.

"Just my size," answered the operator. "You tell them I'll complain to the Comsomol committee. If they go on fooling like this they'll be taken off the orders for the Kuibyshev project. That'll make them jump!"

At first sight of the small operator, Mitya and Seryozha by tacit understanding had both assumed the most casual, indifferent manner, to show this Alexandr Petrovich that so far as they were concerned he was just another lad, nothing out of the way at all. But when they heard him ticking off the foreman they looked at him with involuntary respect.

The operator seemed to have cooled off a little and was listening to the foreman's instructions. Little of their talk could be heard through

the noise, but Mitya was almost sure he heard the operator ask: "Are these kids coming here to work?"

The question was quite friendly, but it was a businesslike question put by an adult, and the foreman answered in the same tone: "They're mechanics. I'm thinking about next year."

Alexandr Petrovich beckoned the boys with his finger, and they were beside his machine in an instant.

"Finishing your first year?"

Mitya nodded.

"Which school?"

"The twenty-eighth. Which did you go to?" asked Mitya.

"The seventh," answered the operator. "Finished two years ago, I know your school; in '48 we wiped the floor with your team at volleyball."

"That was in '48," said Mitya. "You wouldn't find it so easy now."

Alexandr Petrovich looked down at them from the elevation of his box, grinned—and became a boy.

"All sorts of things happened. It even happened that yours won. You tell the fellows to come to our sports field here at the works. Tell them to ask for Alexandr Petrovich Bobrov—that's me."

He turned back to his machine, indicating that he had no more to say.

Got an idea of himself, thought Mitya. Let's wait a year—then we'll talk again.

In reality, Mitya felt keenly how immeasurably above him the operator stood. He, Mitya Vlasov, had only read about the great construction projects, but this fellow had been working for them a long time already. That was the way it always seemed to be—Mitya was too late everywhere, he could only read about things like the Civil War, the recent war and the great construction projects.

Seryozha probably felt something of the same kind, for he put his head close to Mitya's and shouted through the noise: "Fancy doing work like that! And we're making hack-saws!"

"What else?" snapped Mitya, suddenly angry. "A week at the bench and then start assembling turbines—is that what you want?"

When Mitya heard his own thoughts put into words by Seryozha, they sounded very foolish.

The foreman reappeared from somewhere in the shop and led them past a long line of machines. Here the operators attracted their attention more than the machines—especially those who had evidently been trained at vocational schools. There was always something about them that showed it. It was not only age, the worker might look quite grown-up, but Mitya would find some little thing—a belt buckle or some other uniform accessory—to show he was not long out of school. There were many of these operators, and Mitya brightened up.

In the mechanical shop the foreman went to one of the workers and picked up a tracing from the bench.

"Can you read blue-prints?"

"Yes—we've learned," Mitya answered.

"Try this one, then."

Mitya indicated which was "plan" and which was a side elevation, gave the measurements, quoted the margin of tolerance.

"Tools?" asked the foreman. "What would you need to make this part?"

"Bastard file. Smooth-cut file. Vitriol for marking. Centre-punch. Marking tool. Emery."

"Make it more exact. This isn't the school. Here you have to order everything from the tool-room yourself and not send people back twenty times, what's more."

"Round smooth-cut file . . ." Mitya added.

"And what'll you make the hole with? Your finger?"

"A drill. . . . Threading dies. Tap borers."

The foreman picked up another tracing, showed it to Seryozha and examined him about what was the first thing to be done on the job, what were the measurements, what tools were needed. Then he took an irregularly shaped forging from a small locker and told the boys to find the centre.

Whenever they hesitated or their answers were not sufficiently exact, the foreman's face wore a look of agonized endurance as though his tooth were being drilled.

He was evidently quite satisfied with the boys in the end, although he gave them no word of approval. So long as they weren't at his factory, no need to praise them up. In a casual tone he asked them if they were living at the hostel. Hearing their reply, an even more agonized look contorted his face.

"Now look here," he said to Mitya, "haven't you got a single soul here in Moscow?"

"I've got an aunt."

The foreman brightened.

"Could you live with her for a while if it were really necessary?"

Mitya explained that this was hardly likely, since she had gone away to the Far East.

"Well—I don't know, I don't know, lads," said the foreman. "We're a bit short of hostel space just now. . . . But we ought to have our new house up in a year or so."

From his tone one would have thought it was decided long ago that these mechanics (who were not yet mechanics) were to work at the factory, and only a few minor details remained to be settled.

"You'll come here with a fourth rating, then. In a year you'll work up to a fifth, and after that the sixth will be easy. . . . Do you go to evening school?"

"No, we were too late to enter this year."

"Now that's too bad, boys. You've spoiled the whole picture."

Mitya said they fully intended to enter evening school in the autumn. The foreman sighed over a year lost as he took them to the entrance.

"Two more of my lads," he told the watchman. "They'll be getting their factory passes in a year."

The shift foreman was always avidly on the look-out for young workers. It was enough for him to see a lad coping well with a job, or one who seemed to understand what it was all about even if he could not do it and he at once started planning to get hold of that lad.

A good many vocational school boys had their practical training at this very factory, and long before they finished, the foreman started haunting the offices of the factory.

He began with the shop manager. As an introduction he pointed out some vocational school pupil busy at a bench or a milling machine.

"Have you noticed that lad?"

"Aren't you a bit hasty?" The shop manager knew by experience what he was after.

"Who—me? What's he to me? I tell you he's a grand worker. I gave him a complicated part yesterday and purposely didn't tell him how to fix it on. I came back a little later and there he was at work. He'd fastened it according to all the rules, found the base, and d'you know how many revolutions he was doing? Thirteen hundred!"

"Sure you haven't added five hundred?" smiled the manager.

"Well, he did a thousand, anyway—that's straight. You just ask their instructor. The lad doesn't smoke, goes to evening school, the right kind all round. How can we let him slip out of our hands?"

The shift foreman nagged and nagged at the shop manager until the latter promised to go to the factory director; and by that time it usually turned out that it was no longer just one lad, but five or six that simply must be snapped up.

Foreman and manager, solo and duet, would then set about persuading the director. Actually, he did not need very much persuasion; there was only one stumbling block—living accommodation.

"All right, all right," said the director. "You don't need to convince me. Only tell me one thing—do they live in town, or will they need a place in the hostel?"

This was where the foreman began shifting uncomfortably as though a nail were sticking up in his chair, and evaded a direct reply.

"Give me lads like these and I'll move mountains. They'll be doing high-speed work in half a year—that I'll guarantee."

"Yes, but I'm asking you where they'll live. Have they a place here in Moscow or not?"

"Well—I don't know exactly," the foreman hedged. "But they look as though they'd got families."

"Yes, but where? Here in Moscow?"

Here the shop manager joined in.

"Don't forget that the new wing of our hostel will be ready in the summer."

"The wing's not built yet and we've tenanted the whole of it long ago."

When all seemed lost, the foreman played his trump card.

"Well then, since we can't ask for them ourselves, let's put it on a broader basis. Here are six well-trained workers, it would be a shame if our department of the Ministry lost them altogether. I know a foreman at the tool works near by. I'll speak to him; we'll give the boys a really good recommendation, and they can apply for them over there. And if you ring up the director too, he'll thank you for it."

"They're really good lads, you say?" said the director with sudden eagerness.

"You'll not find better," said the shop manager.

"They can do anything," cried the shift foreman, and went on talking about how lucky the neighbouring factory would be to get these six young mechanics and milling-machine operators.

A second-year boy stood by a machine, still a learner—stood on a box because he was too small to reach the cutters — and in the director's office people were discussing him, deciding in which shop he would work, in which room of the hostel he would live.

All the lad had to do was work well at his training; everything was placed in his hands like a rich bride's dowry, everything was his long before he had really done anything to earn it.

Chapter Ten

1

From early morning the whole hostel was busy preparing for the party. The previous evening Mitya had telephoned for the weather forecast. True, the party was to be in the school club-room, but nevertheless Funtikov had asked him to find out what the weather would be. On that last day people were feverishly looking for something that still needed doing; sometimes they forgot the more important things while they fussed with all the trifles that kept cropping up.

Up and down the stairs and on the landings boys had been vigorously polishing their shoes ever since morning. In the rooms they were stitching on clean collar linings. In the wash-rooms they were polishing their metal buttons. Boys ran hither and thither, looking as though the whole party would crash if anybody stopped them for a second.

An exhibition had been arranged in the big technology classroom. There were three show-cases displaying the best work done by mechanics, turners and milling-machine operators.

A dozen times that day Mitya had gone to the mechanics' show-case where his hack-saw was on display. There it lay, beautiful, shining, with a ray of sunshine falling on it as though to single it out from all the other things. Mitya no longer pictured it lying on a shelf in a shop—that had just been a silly kid's idea which he now regarded with scorn. No, the hack-saw was part of an order for the tool works, it would fall into the skilful hands of a mechanic there. If only that mechanic—Mitya felt as though he were a close friend—could have known how much of himself, how much real creative effort a learner had put into that simple hack-saw, he would have felt urged to do only his very best work with it. Mitya had not merely made it, he had created it as surely as though there had never been a hack-saw in the world before.

Whenever Mitya went into the technology room he was sure to meet Kolya Belykh of the milling-machine group. Neither of them would have admitted just why they so often found themselves by the show-cases.

"Hello—what you doing here?"

"Oh, just came for a bit of chalk—and you?"

"We needed a chair."

Tanya Sozina came running in, wearing her fairy costume for the entertainment that was to be given in the evening. In Tanya's opinion, the turners' show-case stood in a bad light, and too little of the girls' work was shown.

Never had a fairy had such pink cheeks, from temple to chin, as

Tanya Sozina. The sight of her costume dumbfounded Mitya, he could only mumble a confused "hello."

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Strolling round," Mitya answered foolishly, and felt angry with himself. "What have you toggged yourself up in that thing for?"

"What thing?" said Tanya, offended, and smoothed her silk skirt. "You're very rude. . . ."

"Are you going to perform this evening?"

"We're doing a dance. What are you doing?"

"I'll be one of the ushers."

"Ah, I see," said Tanya.

In comparison with Tanya's costume and her appearance on the stage, Mitya's ordinary clothes and his duties at the party seemed very humdrum.

"Have you seen the show-case?" asked Mitya carelessly. "That hack-saw's mine."

"I've seen it. And that cylinder ring's mine."

"Gosh, what a hedgehog you are," said Mitya. "Look here, let's not quarrel today."

"I'm not quarrelling." Tanya shrugged her shoulders.

Somebody called her from the corridor and she ran out.

Mitya went down to help Kostya Nazarov. They climbed on step-ladders by the main entrance to nail up a board with WELCOME TO OLD FRIENDS in huge letters.

Big stands had been set up on either side of the entrance hall, one with portraits of former pupils who had distinguished themselves in their work, and the other with portraits of present pupils who had distinguished themselves in their training.

Kostya's mother had received an invitation two days before, brought by Tanya and Vasya Andronov. Kostya was at home when they came, but went out at once. His mother wanted to give them tea, and show them the album with photographs of Kostya when he was a baby, but they were in a hurry, refused the tea and only glanced quickly at the album.

Kostya soon returned and at once noticed the invitation card on the table.

"You keep away from that party," he said.

His mother looked piteous and frightened, and—perhaps for the first time in his life—the thought came to Kostya that he never said a kind word to her. He did not even know how to begin. It was strange—he had copied so many portraits of fine people, men and boys, from small photographs in the past few days, he had printed so many words of warm praise beneath them, but now, at home, he could not find a single good word for his mother.

"There's nothing for you to go for," he said, frowning. "Certificates of merit'll be handed out, but not to me."

"They've not done right by you, Kostya," said his mother hesitantly. "You've been trying hard lately. . . ."

"Eh, Mother, we don't get anywhere, you and I," he answered, and went out to put on the kettle.

When he was doing the decorations, he made up his mind to finish everything given him, and then go home before the guests arrived. But as

though to spite him, the instructor came up and told him he was to be one of the ushers meeting the guests in the lobby.

"Finish everything here, get a good wash and brush up, and then join Vlasov by the door."

Somebody came to say Mitya was wanted in the teachers' room. He went up, and saw a lad with a bundle standing by the door, looking round and smiling bashfully.

"Hello, Mitya! I told you at the station that I'd come!"

Mitya's heart gave a great thump. Vitka Karpov, large as life—in fact a little larger than Mitya remembered him—Vitka bringing the very breath of Lebedyan, looking somehow strange because he was not wearing school uniform, holding out the bundle to Mitya.

"Your mother asked me to bring you this—it's cakes and berries."

"Have you come to stop?" Mitya asked eagerly.

It appeared that Vitka had come with his mother for three days to visit friends, and at the same time to sell their pork on the market; they had killed a pig weighing eight poods.

How far away all this seemed to Mitya! He almost blurted out: "Fancy coming to Moscow only for that!" but bit it back just in time; he did not want his friend to think he had a swelled head. And Vitka himself did not want to tell Mitya how he had stood beside his mother at the market taking the money while she weighed the pork which Mitya had known as a piglet.

Mitya took him to look at the hostel, showed where he slept and introduced Seryozha Boikov and Senya Voronchuk who dashed in for a moment. He explained that everything was upside down today because of the party in the evening, told Vitka to come, there would be a ticket for him, then took him back to the school to see the exhibition. He was feeling rather sorry for his friend and decided not to say that the hack-saw was his, but somehow it slipped out. "It's nothing very difficult," he added quickly, "anybody could do it."

He showed Vitka his Comsomol membership card.

Vitka always liked to contradict or go one better, but his friend's triumphant success was so obvious and so great that there was absolutely nothing he could say.

In the workshop he looked at the vice and files Mitya used. What had he to compare with that? A pig weighing eight poods?

Don't think Mitya took his friend round just to show off. He did not even think that he had done anything special. On the contrary, when he saw Vitka both admiring and crushed, he kept insisting that every boy in the place had just as much to show as he had.

"You come here and train too! You must! Listen, I'll talk to your mother myself if you like."

Vitka gave him all the news from Lebedyan. The club was ready; it was to be opened in a few days. Volodya Petrenko had written from Ryzan that he was finishing his vocational school with a fifth rating and was going to work at the Kuibyshev Hydroelectric Station project (now it was Mitya's turn to feel a pang of envy). Misha Zaitsev sent greetings; he was in the sixth form. Mitya's mother was quite well but missed him very much; she sent her love and said he must always behave well and take care of himself, and she was looking forward to seeing him during the holidays.

"Has she got old?" asked Mitya.

"No, nothing special. Just like mothers always are, you know."

They talked some more and then Vitka went, promising to come back for the party in the evening.

Actually, there was nothing else Mitya had to do, but he kept wandering about the school, reluctant to admit that he was free, inventing pretexts to go to the club, to the Comsomol committee room, to peep into the assistant director's office and to run from the ground floor up to the fourth.

From the side rooms opening on to the main hall of the club came the sounds of an orchestra, choral singing and the tap of dancing feet. A long table with a red cloth had been set up on the stage, backed by the scenery for the evening—young birch trees and a river.

He opened the doors one after the other and looked in, and from one after the other he was driven away, but did not mind in the least. He sat down in the first row of seats in the empty hall, then climbed up on to the stage and pictured the hall full of people, and himself about to make a speech. After a quick glance round to make sure that nobody was there, he said loudly: "Comrades!"

His voice echoed in the empty hall.

"Comrades," he said again, much more quietly. "I am very glad to welcome you. I have just finished my first year with the mark of 'Excellent.'"

Here he stuck. He could think of nothing more to say—except for one phrase which always came in handy: "We shall not rest upon our laurels."

"Vlasov, I've been looking for you everywhere!" said a voice from the darkness at the far end of the hall. "You're always hanging round when you're not needed, and when you are, you've disappeared."

The Comsomol secretary Antonina Vasilyevna appeared in the gangway. Mitya jumped off the stage, crimson to the ears.

"Sit down a minute," said Antonina Vasilyevna in a voice that boded nothing good. "There are people in my room all the time, and I've got to talk to you seriously. You're responsible for the entrance hall this evening, aren't you?"

"Yes—why?"

"And Kostya Nazarov's in your team?"

"Yes. . . ."

"Why didn't you tell me about the mood he's in? Did you know he meant to go home and not come to our party?"

"Yes, I knew. He said he had a headache."

"Rubbish. It's his vanity that's aching, that's all."

Mitya grinned.

"It's nothing to laugh at," said Antonina Vasilyevna. "You're a fine one! Do you think if your hack-saw's in the display then everything's all right, you're a reliable mechanic and good citizen? I've been watching you for a while now. You think I don't know why you didn't want to say at the Comsomol meeting that Boikov hadn't prepared his maths? Didn't want to give away a pal! That's not friendship, young man, it's indifference to your friend's real interests. And you don't care a rap what happens to Nazarov either. . . ."

"Antonina Vasilyevna, I helped him with his Russian. . . ."

"And so you should, it's your duty, and nothing to boast about. For a Comsomol member, taking exams and doing decent work in the shop

is only half the job. Do you think that when we have Communism the most important thing for lads will be for everybody to get top marks? They'll be different, they'll have a different way of looking at things, a different attitude towards other people. . . . Well," and Antonina Vasilyevna rose, "first of all, you're responsible for seeing that Kostya's at the party this evening. And secondly, at the next Comsomol meeting in your group, you give a talk on friendship and what it means."

With a sudden smile she added: "You know how to make speeches from the stage, so you ought to be able to give a talk."

2

At seven the guests began to arrive.

First they passed Mitya and Kostya singly and the boys could take a good look at them—some in hats, some in caps, a few in officers' uniforms; but then they began coming so fast that there was no time to notice them individually.

The old cloak-room attendant known as Auntie Pasha was in a whirl of greetings and reminiscences. "Goodness, that's never Yurka Sazonov! Vitka—Vitya Gorokhin! Stop a minute—they used to call you Bun!"

The weather was warm, there was practically nothing to leave in the cloak-room, but everybody went up to Auntie Pasha. Mitya could hear laughter, exclamations, and to tell the truth, he could not at all understand such high delight at seeing the cloak-room attendant. He did not yet know what it means to come back to the place where one has grown up, where people have known one as a boy.

A man came in carrying a large suitcase labelled "Prague." He set it down on the floor beside Mitya and wiped his forehead.

"I'm not late, am I?"

"This is the vocational school," said Mitya, thinking he had come to the wrong place.

"I know that, I've come for the old boys' party, it's today, isn't it? Ah—hello, how do, Auntie Pasha!"

The cloak-room attendant peered at the new arrival.

"Just a minute, I don't seem to remember you. . . ."

"You'll remember in a minute," laughed the man and to Mitya's amazement he softly whistled a lively tune.

Auntie Pasha listened for a second.

"Vasya Korobov!" she exclaimed and laughed and



cried together. "You came in '40 in faded cotton shorts. . . . Only that high! . . . Remember how they wanted to expel you, Vasya?"

All the time Auntie Pasha was putting Korobov's things in the cloak-room, scraps of conversation floated over to Mitya—all the trouble Vasya had got into, he had broken that glass by the stairs, taken a cap and great-coat from some first-year boy, stolen cucumbers from gardens when the school had been evacuated.

"What are you doing now?" asked Auntie Pasha.

"I'm an engineer. I've been in Czechoslovakia, now I'm going to the Volga. I'm married, got a little girl. Like to see her picture?"

More and more guests arrived. Sometimes two grown men would grab hold of one another in the lobby, start thumping one another on the back, calling one another ridiculous nicknames and talking what sounded to Mitya like absolute nonsense, which nevertheless seemed to send them into transports of delight.

In general, some of the guests acted very queerly; for instance, there was the man with the moustache who stopped by Mitya.

"Are you in the hostel? Which floor?"

"The first."

"Listen, lad, who's in the third room on the right?"

"That's mine," said Mitya, surprised. "Do you want any of our boys?"

The man waited while a number of guests passed Mitya, then resumed his questions.

"Who's in the bed by the window on the right?"

"I am."

The man suddenly seized Mitya's hand and shook it.

"You've got my bed, then. I come to this party every year, and I always find out who's got my old first-year bed."

He looked Mitya up and down, from head to foot.

"And now here's some information for you," he went on impressively. "In ten years not a single slacker has ever had my bed. Three technicians, two engineers, four team foremen, and I myself, a die-cutter. Got that clear?"

He turned and went up the stairs to the club-room.

When the third bell rang, Mitya left his post in the lobby and went into the hall. Kostya Nazarov was with him. Mitya had told him that if he acted the fool with his headache nobody would ever bother with him again, that nobody wanted to get reprimands all because of him, and that in general with Communism so near it was time to drop all these tricks. After pouring all that out in one breath Mitya seized his sleeve and added imploringly: "Listen, Kostya, I'll get it in the neck if you're not there, don't let me down, Kostya. . . ."

Another thing that may have helped was Vitka Karpov's appearance at that moment, and Mitya's introduction of Kostya as "our chief artist."

The ceremony had already started when Mitya slipped into the hall. The members of the platform party were seated behind a long table.

Mitya found a place in a corner and pointed out the various people on the stage to Vitka.

For the first time in their lives Petya Funtikov, Senya Voronchuk and Vanya Tikhonov were in a platform party. And it is no simple thing to know how to conduct yourself there! Sometimes a smile almost seems to burst out and you force it back and put on a serious, important expres-

sion; you do not know what to do with your hands and keep shifting them about; you pick out familiar faces in the hall, then you look to one side or up to the ceiling—yes, it is a bit of a puzzle, how to act on a platform.

Down in the hall a good six hundred youngsters were gazing up at the stage.

They looked at it as into a magic mirror—showing them their own future. There were the guests—engineers, technicians, foremen, skilled workmen, young members of the Communist Party. Once, not so very long ago, they too had sat down there in the hall. That was their past, their early youth looking up at them. And if one of the boys had begun to write the story of his life, any of the guests could have continued it from the place where the boy stopped.

Victor Petrovich, the director, read out the results for the year. The first place had been taken by the sixth group, monitor Petya Funtikov, Comsomol organizer Senya Voronchuk.

Mitya applauded so vigorously that his palms tingled. He looked for the milling-machine boys—yes, they were taking it in the proper sporting spirit, clapping for all they were worth. The crimson banner was brought up on to the stage, placed in Funtikov's hands. A magnificent velvet banner. If only there could have been a wind, a gale to raise its crimson folds and make it stream out in all its glory! The first banner won by Mitya! He turned to Kostya Nazarov.

"Ours! We won it!" he yelled through the thunderous applause.

He looked at Vanya Tikhonov with affection, gratitude and sympathy. If his confused thoughts could have been put into words, they would have run something like this: "Dear, splendid fellows, good lads, fine lads to have given us the banner, how on earth can they bear to lose it?"

Funtikov gripped the staff so tightly that his knuckles showed white. He had already found time to whisper to Voronchuk that they would have to have a Comsomol meeting the next day to settle where the banner was to stand, and the most important thing—to impress on all the lads that getting it was only half the battle, the thing was to keep it.

Now he could go home to Otradnoye with a light heart. If only he could be photographed like this, and take a picture to his mother! . . .

Kostya Nazarov's mother told the woman sitting next to her that her son was in the sixth group. It was he who had drawn all the pictures down in the lobby, and he always made up the school wall newspapers. Yes, she was fortunate to have such a good son. Now—what could she buy him tomorrow that he would really like?

Kolya Belykh, of the milling-machine group, swallowed his chagrin and applauded heartily. All right. We'll see. Your lot's got it this time. But the really important thing is who gets it in the second year. We'll see who does best when we all start in the factory. . . . He had almost consoled himself when a ray of light from somewhere fell on the banner, now in other hands; a pang shot through Kolya's heart and he clapped harder than ever, to dull it.

Vasili Yakovlevich sat looking down at the boys. He had been at many such parties, but the feelings they stirred in him were as keen as the first time. As he too applauded the sixth group, he thought of the hundreds of trains that come to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Sverdlovsk. Lads carrying country baskets emerged from the coaches. They followed the

crowd to the station square and stopped dead, amazed at the sight of the great city, then set off to find their place in it.

They had no letters of recommendation, no addresses of friends or relatives, not very much money. All they had was a birth certificate, a school certificate saying they had finished six or seven forms, and a certificate from the collective farm where they lived—all carefully sewn into an inner pocket by mothers, with strict injunctions not to lose them.

There he stood, this country lad of fourteen or fifteen who had probably never before been farther from home than the nearest town. Was he intimidated at the sight of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev? . . .

Naturally, he was knocked a bit off his balance at first by the noise, the large buildings, the stream of cars, trams and trolley-buses. But this was the natural perturbation of a person suddenly finding himself in strange surroundings. It never even entered his head that he could go under in the city; he had no feeling of being superfluous or unwanted.

On the station square stood one of those huge boards. The lad picked up his basket and went over to read. One glance was enough to tell him that he was surely wanted and needed in this great city; he was expected; they were waiting for him.

Now came the decisive moment in the life of this fifteen-year-old. Here, on the station square, he chose his future path. He was like a knight standing at the cross-roads; but there was one great difference—whatever road this lad took, it would lead to success.

Lads arriving in big cities went away from these boards in various directions. They did not yet realize that all their ways would join.

One of them might think he had had enough of school and decide to go at once to a factory as apprentice. Another might look carefully down the list, seeking the agricultural school he had dreamed about for a year now; a third would look for a maritime school—the very name with its romantic associations made his heart beat faster. But the majority carefully read the names of vocational schools and noted down the addresses.

There had been a time, not so very long ago, when people had been sent to outlying towns and villages to popularize the vocational schools. Efforts had to be made to get a certain number of boys from each district for training. After much urging, mothers apprehensively agreed to send their sons or daughters into the unknown. Village schools tried to get rid of their worst pupils. The result was a noisy, variegated and sometimes extremely difficult set of pupils. The instructors and teachers had a hard time with them. There would be great hulking fellows of seventeen, smelling of tobacco, who could hardly fit themselves into the desks, and treble-voiced boys of thirteen, all in the same group.

Yes, the instructors and teachers had no easy time in those early years. There were no traditions, there was no experience to guide them. Two years is a very short time in which to turn thirty awkward, sometimes ignorant youths into thirty skilled workers.

The instructors struggled with the task, sometimes made mistakes, but in the end succeeded. The Comsomol strove mightily to turn this heterogeneous crowd into sensible, reliable lads with wide horizons. Boys would often change so completely in this short time that if one of them on leaving had come up against himself as he had been two years previously there would have been a heated quarrel.

In those first years the instructors were elderly men who had gained

their seventh or eighth rating in many years of work. To them belonged the honour of launching this difficult but worth-while training. They were the first who learned to instil into heedless lads a love of work well done, to give them a sense of responsibility, the understanding that their work, *theirs*, was of importance to the whole state.

Probably their best reward was five or six years later, when their old pupils came back to be instructors in their turn.

Experience was garnered, traditions formed.

Now nobody had to popularize vocational schools; there was no need to persuade parents, still less the boys themselves. The fame of young workers trained in these schools was already widespread. Many former pupils had already distinguished themselves. Whenever a factory wanted to launch some innovation, it was often youths not long out of vocational school who were in the lead.

Vasili Yakovlevich's thoughts as he applauded the sixth group may not have been expressed in exactly these words, but this was the general sense of the feeling that stirred him, just as it stirs the author of this book.

After the presentation of the banner, the director read out the names of the prize winners. The shift foreman at the tool factory quickly jotted them down, with meaning glances at his director who was in the platform party.

The boys came on to the stage one by one to receive their prizes.

When the director said: "Vlasov!" Mitya started and shouted "Present!" at the top of his voice. Vitka Karpov stared dumbfounded, but Mitya no longer had eyes for his friend as he rose and made his way through the hall to the stage. He felt as though he were swimming under water open-eyed—there was a rushing in his ears and forms were vague.

Antonina Vasilyevna held out a set of chessmen and a board to Mitya. He took it, whispered "thank you," then bobbed his head to one side—whether to the platform or the hall was not clear.

Vasili Yakovlevich mounted the rostrum and made a short speech. He said that the five million skilled workers whom the country would get from the vocational schools under the present five-year plan would be an army going all out to build a splendid future. "You will not be merely mechanics, turners or milling-machine operators. There have been highly skilled workers before; there are many today in other countries besides the Soviet Union. But nowhere and never before have there been metal workers who are builders of Communism—that is the highest rating any worker can get."

He said that already here, in the school, the boys must measure up to this level, check their actions by this gauge. In a couple of days the first-year boys would be going home for the holidays. And there, in these old, familiar surroundings, they would find out how much they had changed and developed in this year. They would feel they could not sit about idly, they would take their share in the life of the collective farm, so that people would say: "Yes, they're a real help. We did right when we sent them to the vocational school, and the Government is right in spending tens of millions on our children."

"And now I want to say a word to you, second-year boys, who are soon to leave us," the assistant director went on. "In a few days the commission will examine your work and give you your final ratings. You will

start work on your own. Remember that it depends on you how soon Communism comes."

The whole audience rose to applaud. They were applauding their future, they could feel it close by, beside them, just outside the door. In that moment Mitya Vlasov, Seryozha Boikov, Kolya Belykh—all these lads no longer felt themselves lads, first-year pupils, they felt that they were people from whom the whole country expected great things.

Only the youngest guest there, Vitka Karpov, felt even smaller and more insignificant than he really was.

But what real friend when his cup is filled and running over does not want to share his happiness, to see his friend as well-dowered as himself?

"Listen, Vitka, you're only a year behind me, come here to our school, you'll never regret it, honest you won't! . . . I'll take you to our assistant director if you like."

During the interval Mitya led his friend round, introducing him to everybody: "Vitka Karpov. From Lebedyan. He's coming here next year."

When the performance began, however, he forgot everything else. First he kept fidgeting, wondering how soon Tanya Sozina would appear. Then during her dance he was afraid he was giving himself away to the other boys. What a dance that was! Some fine string seemed to be vibrating within him; he could almost hear it. He did not venture to clap when the fairy dance ended, but was immeasurably grateful to Vitka for clapping with all his might.

During the second interval Mitya made his way behind the scenes. He mooned about fingering the scenery. The two trees which had stood on the stage when Tanya danced had been pushed away into a corner. They were not in the least like trees. And the grove painted on the back-drop looked utterly unreal now that there were no fairies.

Excited performers rushed past Mitya. Two gymnasts—agile little Vasya Andronov and tall Vanya Tikhonov—were rubbing chalk on their hands, and took no notice of him. They evidently felt very fine indeed in their new costumes. Vanya raised Andronov and held him on upstretched arms, tossed him in the air, caught him, placed him on the floor and bowed to an imaginary audience. Four girls in Russian peasant costumes held hands. One of them was Zina. Pitching her voice high to be heard over the noise and bustle, she cried: "Ready—go! One—!"

No sign of Tanya anywhere. A second-year boy was sitting in one of the dressing-rooms, quietly picking out a melody on an accordion. A bar and weights lay on the floor—for the weight-lifters. Mitya had a try with them, but the accordion player told him angrily to get out. Mitya did not argue, although he did not like the airs people were giving themselves backstage. He went out into the corridor. Again no Tanya. The first bell rang. Mitya peeped into another room. A choir was singing; the conductor, Kolya Belykh, made a furious grimace when Mitya peeped in and hissed angrily: "Shut that door!"

Mitya felt superfluous, out-of-place and exasperated. And it was all Tanya's fault. Where on earth had she got to? . . . The girls in Russian peasant dress came running past, Zina calling as they went: "Remember—we've got to bow all together!"

Don't be in such a hurry with your bowing, Mitya thought acidly. Maybe nobody'll applaud.

He went into the wings again and suddenly saw Tanya. She had changed into her ordinary clothes.

"You danced very well," said Mitya resolutely.

"Did you like it?" said Tanya, pleased.

"I wouldn't say so if I didn't. . . ."

Suddenly both were overcome by a wave of embarrassment. Tanya kept twisting and untwisting a piece of string, Mitya took his fountain-pen out of his pocket and screwed and unscrewed its cap.

"I wonder what it'll be like in the autumn," said Mitya.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, here's the summer, we're going away, and then we'll all be back here together again. Have you decided where you're going?"

"I don't know."

"Haven't you any relations at all? Nobody?"

"No, nobody."

"I haven't many either—only my mother. . . ."

"A mother—that's a lot," said Tanya, and the eyes she raised to Mitya were austere but sad.

"I know," said Mitya quickly. "Look here—would you like me to write to you in the summer?"

"All right."

"No but tell me—do you want me to?" Afraid that if he waited for an answer he might get one he did not like, he added quickly: "I've never written to anybody in my life."

Instead of answering she nodded; Mitya liked that much better, her brief nod meant more than any words.

The bell rang twice, right by their ears. Mitya felt as though a train were just going to leave and carry Tanya away.

"Only don't tell Zina," he begged.

Tanya nodded again. His agitation was transmitted to her. He feverishly twisted his fountain-pen, never noticing that his fingers were covered with ink. On the stage everything was ready for the curtains to rise. The two gymnasts appeared in the wings, looking pale—evidently their act came first. The accordion player ran across the stage and stood beside them. Somebody shouted impatiently from the other side of the stage: "Sozina! Tanya! Get ready!"

"What do they want you for?" whispered Mitya. "Your turn's over."

She showed him the rope she had been twisting, and he saw that it hung down from above. He still did not understand what it was all about, he wanted to say he had dreamed of Tanya last night, and took hold of the rope too for greater courage. The bell rang the third time. The same voice shouted: "Sozina, open the curtains! Vlasov, get away from there!"

Tanya began feverishly hauling the rope and Mitya sneaked off along a brick wall, past two flowering trees and a shady grove, back to the auditorium.

After the concert the proper thing, of course, was to go to bed. But who on earth could tamely lie down and sleep on such a night!

Petya Funtikov chose the most staid, well-behaved boys—Voronchuk, Mitya, Vanya—and went to look for Vasili Yakovlevich. Mitya insisted it was better to ask permission of the director himself, but Funtikov had thought it all out. "If the assistant director refuses, we can try the director. But you can't do it the other way round. . . ."

They found Vasili Yakovlevich by the door of the hall with some of the guests.

"Vasili Yakovlevich," said Funtikov, "may we speak to you a moment? . . . We want to go out for an hour or so—to see the boys home. . . ."

"At this hour of the night? It's time for bed!"

"We're not children, Vasili Yakovlevich. . . ." Funtikov coughed as his father always did when something was refused him, and went on in an injured tone: "When it's work we're grown up, when it's going out we're children. . . ."

"Not allowed to go to the pictures without permission till we're sixteen," added Mitya.

"But we have to take a full ticket on the railway," Voronchuk concluded.

"We can be included in the platform party, but we can't go out at night," said Vanya Tikhonov.

Defeated by the boys' logic, the assistant director let them go.

They poured out of the door in a noisy crowd, light of heart, ready for any pranks or exploits.

They stood for a while on Kamenny Bridge, then went down the steps to the river bank. Kostya Nazarov flung an empty cigarette packet into the water, it fell close to the bank and floated with the current, slowly turning.

"D'you think it'll go right down to the sea?" asked Seryozha Boikov.

"It'll get soaked and sink," Funtikov answered.

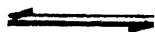
Mitya suddenly jumped on to the stone parapet.

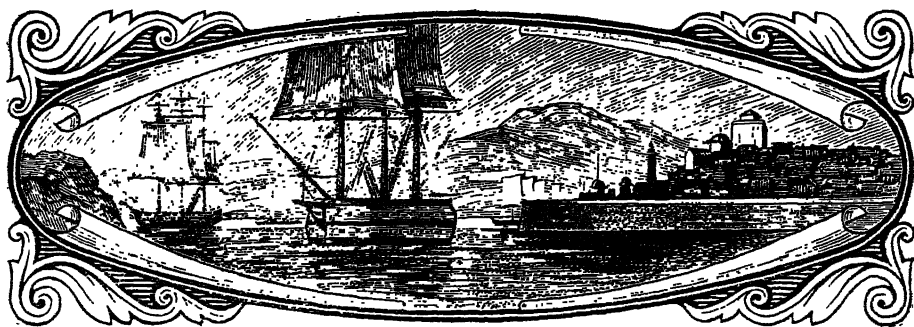
"Dare me to get it!"

But nobody wanted to dare him, and Tanya Sozina, for whose sake he was ready to jump into the river, was nowhere near.

Translated by Eve Manning

Illustrations by F. Lemkul





SERGEI SERGEYEV-TSENSKY

ADMIRAL NAKHIMOV

I

In the three weeks that had passed since the day when the enemy assault had been so brilliantly repulsed—a day long to be remembered by the invading armies—there had been no rest for Nakhimov. Every day brought its own flock of cares and anxieties, although the daily bombardment rarely exceeded a thousand shells and the rifle fire was no worse than usual.

The admiral's anxiety for the fate of the town of which he was considered governor had even grown. This was because of the cannonade that an enemy squadron had conducted on the night of the fifth of June.

The ships of this squadron had come under the return fire of the forts, but with what result no one knew; the cannonade, however, had lasted continuously for six hours. Nakhimov afterwards went out in a gig to examine the block-ships that had been sunk across the entrance to the bay. He found that some of them had shifted owing to recent storms, others had been sucked down into the sand—even their masts were submerged—and there was imminent danger that the allied fleet might penetrate the bay, whence they could quickly destroy those parts of the town which were as yet out of range of the enemy's field-batteries.

As an experienced sailor, Nakhimov considered such action on the part of the allied admirals more than possible; it was precisely what he would have done himself had he been in their place.

This conclusion, of course, destroyed his peace of mind. At garrison headquarters he urged that immediate steps be taken to defend the bay, but since he grudged sinking his own ships for the purpose, he was left with only one alternative—to station batteries on the adjoining shore

This is an excerpt from Sergeyev-Tsensky's Stalin Prize novel, *The Defence of Sevastopol*, treating of the Crimean War of 1854-55.

with enough fire power to destroy any enemy squadron that might be tempted one night to break through the line of sunken ships.

At his insistence, and under his personal supervision, such a battery—a battery of thirty guns ranged in a double row—was stationed on North Side between the Konstantin and Mikhail forts. This battery was named after Nakhimov. Besides this, in case one or two ships should succeed in breaking through, two more batteries were stationed farther along the shore—one of ten guns, the other of four—exclusively for action within the bay.

When the earthworks round the batteries had been completed, and the steel sentinels of the bay—forty-four new guns—had been mounted in the positions assigned to them, Nakhimov breathed more easily. Just at that time, however, horses, camels and bullocks began to arrive dragging loads of the finest thick pinewood logs, and men began stacking these logs on the shore, near the Mikhail fort.

The logs had been brought from Kherson, the port to which timber was usually floated down the Dnieper to provide for the needs of the Black Sea coast and the whole Crimea. It so happened that while Nakhimov was inspecting his batteries, these logs were being received by Lieutenant-General Buchmeyer, an officer of General Gorchakov's staff. Noticing Buchmeyer from a distance, Nakhimov rode over to him.

"Tell me, Alexandr Yefimovich, for the love of heaven, what's all this wonderful timber for, eh?" Nakhimov asked the Lieutenant-General, whom he bore great respect, if only because he was an engineer like Totleben.

Buchmeyer, who was nearly the same age as Nakhimov, but almost entirely grey—even his moustache that had once been jet-black—made no immediate reply. He took off his cap, mopped his high perspiring forehead, and only then, choosing his words carefully, said:

"His Excellency has ordered a bridge to be built across the bay to facilitate communications between North and South Sides, Pavel Stepanovich."

"A bridge? At this point? . . . Why, the bay is nearly a verst wide here! How can you?" Nakhimov exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, that is a problem. . . . And, what's more, we shall be under fire from over there," Buchmeyer nodded in the direction of the enemy batteries. "They won't let us work without hindrance, you may be sure; but the bridge must be built."

"We have managed very well till now without a bridge. Why the sudden need? . . . H'm, h'm . . . a bridge! A pontoon bridge!" Nakhimov's astonished blue eyes bored into Buchmeyer's, which were brown.

"But you must agree, Pavel Stepanovich, that any large military unit will be able to cross the bay far more quickly by a bridge than on transports! And it is not to be a pontoon bridge; we shall build it of logs, with a movable section in the middle."

"Of logs? And a verst long?" Now Nakhimov's doubts were those of the commander in charge of defence, who had himself built a pontoon bridge across the South Bay.

"I have never had a job like this before either," Buchmeyer answered modestly. "I put a bridge about half a verst long across the Danube at Izmail, but that was a pontoon bridge. . . . Besides, the conditions of work were quite different. . . . But we must do what we are ordered."

"Even if it's impossible?"

Buchmeyer smiled faintly.

"Theoretically it is possible, of course. . . . We know that logs float and can hold a great weight. . . . Rafts bound together. . . ."

"But it'll be awash the moment the sea gets a little rough!" Nakhimov illustrated his words with a wave of his arms.

"I won't argue with you there. It may be swept by seas if there's a wind. . . . And it may sag, too, with heavy loads moving across it, guns, for instance. But its advantages for transport are great; there can be no doubt of that. It will be extremely convenient."

"They'll smash it!" exclaimed Nakhimov with a gesture of finality.

Buchmeyer smiled afresh. "I still think, if I may make so bold, that they will not succeed in smashing the whole bridge. If it is damaged by shell-fire, we can repair it. . . . We shall keep a stock of materials for such eventualities. Then, of course, we shall open fire with our guns—they will be firing at the bridge, and we shall be firing at them."

"So it's signed and sealed, is it? The bridge is to be built, eh?" Nakhimov asked unable to conceal his annoyance.

"Most certainly it is," Buchmeyer replied. "I lack only the information to tell you exactly when it will be ready, Pavel Stepanovich. That depends on many circumstances, but I shall endeavour to have it ready as soon as possible."

"Good-bye!" Nakhimov snapped. He shook Buchmeyer's hand hurriedly and turned his horse in the direction of the naval hospital, which he visited whenever he crossed to the North Side.

"Did you ever see anything so base?" he demanded of the hospital superintendent Colonel Komarovsky, who had come out to meet him.

Komarovsky had certainly never seen the admiral so indignant; Nakhimov's face was an apoplectic purple that tinged even his blue eyes.

Honest and conscientious by nature, Komarovsky stood at attention puffing out his chest and striving to understand by whom and on what pretext he could have been reported to the admiral.

"Did you ever see anything so base?" Nakhimov repeated, treating the colonel to an annihilating glare.

"Er . . . I couldn't say, Your Excellency," Komarovsky stammered. "What is it, Your Excellency?"

"You couldn't say! And it's happening under your very nose!" Nakhimov frowned and spun Komarovsky about so that he could see the logs stacked on the shore.

"What's that? Eh?" he shouted with a flourish.

"They're moving timber," Komarovsky replied, gazing up at the admiral in wonder.

"Timber indeed! But what's it for? . . . They want to build a bridge across the bay! . . . They want to abandon Sevastopol, that's what!"

Now Colonel Komarovsky was bewildered not because "they" should wish to abandon Sevastopol—he had heard such wishes expressed before—but because Nakhimov had chosen him as an audience for his indignation.

But it was of little moment to Nakhimov whom he shouted at to relieve the anger that was choking him.

Gorchakov's plan to abandon the "accursed town" was not new to Nakhimov; he had heard about it frequently, both at councils of war and when he visited the general. But since the last assault had been repulsed, Gorchakov's anxiety seemed to have diminished, and all his instructions

had tended towards the strengthening of Sevastopol's defences by every possible means.

Now it appeared that all that had been for show, while the real plan was being executed in secret, here. Under the pretext of making it easier to transport troops across the bay for the reinforcement of the garrison in event of a fresh assault, a path of retreat was undoubtedly being prepared for the whole Sevastopol garrison. The retreat would take place at the order of the Commander-in-Chief, under cover of night, and to the triumphant enemy would be yielded everything that had cost such immeasurable and invaluable labour and sacrifice.

While Komarovskiy was still grasping, or trying to grasp, the connection between the stack of timber on the shore and the abandoning of Sevastopol, Nakhimov repeated, shaking his head despondently:

"How base! How utterly base!"

II

To abandon Sevastopol even after three assaults was for him the same as surrendering his ship to the enemy even after the bloodiest of battles.

Many were surprised at the coolness with which Nakhimov went round the bastions every day when sometimes they were under the fiercest fire; but as a matter of fact it came quite naturally to him.

From early youth he had prepared himself for fighting, not for easy successes in the drawing rooms of high-placed commanders, or at an office desk. He was neither a born conversationalist, nor was he a very good administrator, and in the latter respect he was very willing to acknowledge Kornilov's superiority.

Yet in his quite unaffected and utterly natural composure in the face of the direst danger, he excelled all his fellow commanders; because his was the business-like composure of a battle-hardened sailor, for whom the deck of his ship is a fortress, who has the power to return the fire of the enemy, but no power to hide from him or run away.

When Lieutenant Nakhimov, still young but already old enough to have sailed round the world, took part aboard the flagship *Azov* in one of the most famous battles in naval history, the battle of Navarino, he spent the whole battle with the men at the guns.

Already weathered by the storms of three oceans and more than half the world's seas, he was finally toughened in that battle.

The battle was unbelievably fierce. The *Azov* fought five Turkish ships at once. Her hull was pierced in about a hundred and fifty places, and all her masts were smashed, yet she not only survived, but succeeded, thanks to the incomparable prowess of the men at the guns, in sinking two large frigates and a corvette, and in setting fire to an eighty-gun man-of-war and a frigate—in other words, in destroying all five ships she fought.

As one of the young officers who particularly distinguished himself in the battle, Nakhimov was recommended for the Cross of St. George and the rank of Lieutenant-Captain; incidentally, he had done no more than the sailors round him had done—directed the fire of the guns without paying any attention to the effects of the enemy's fire.

The battle of Navarino made Nakhimov a fighter; in four hours it fashioned him to the stature he retained for the rest of his life. And afterwards, when he took command first of a ship, then of a whole squadron,

he trained his young officers not merely for reviews, but for battle, just as his sailors were trained.

True, he had to wait a long time for his next battle—twenty six years! A different type of man might have become demagnetized after so long, might have lost interest; might have become draped by the years in rank, medals and fat; might merely have acquired the pose, the heavy tread, the hoarse bellow of a commander. But Nakhimov did not become demagnetized; he wrote his own vivid page in the chronicle of great sea-battles—Sinop.

And this was a double victory—not only over the Turkish fleet which was supported by the fire of coastal batteries, but over the storms of the Black Sea in autumn. For a sailing squadron to remain at sea for several weeks, in spite of continuous high winds blowing up periodically into gales—that, too, was a feat of which, as it turned out, only Nakhimov and the crews he himself had trained were capable.

Half the ships of Nakhimov's squadron could not stand the grueling and were crying out for repair, but the men stood it, and in so doing they astonished even the British and French admirals, who knew full well why Nakhimov was cruising so regardless of self amid the storms, yet did not venture to put out to sea and help the Turks, excusing themselves on the grounds of impossible sailing weather.

No sooner had the rumble of guns at Sinop died away, than the fierce struggle for Sevastopol began—nearly ten months of the most violent onslaught, a battle of Sinop that never ended.

"Pavel Stepanovich, you might give the bastions a miss today...."

"Why give them a miss? No, you know, somehow I breathe easier out there...."

The phrase was apt. Nakhimov could breathe more easily on the bastions, as if they were ships like those of Navarino and Sinop, except that they were lying permanently at anchor and doing their formidable job despite all the typically Russian good-nature of their crews.

When he was not in the thick of the fighting, the fair-haired, blue-eyed Nakhimov showed that same typically Russian good-nature—a good-nature that made him, despite his rank of full admiral, accessible to any sailor and ready to listen to any request. But when he was under fire on the bastions he would become more taut, would strain his eyes and raise his voice to a shout, for only a shout could be heard. Yet he remained what he had been in those incredible hours at Navarino—a sailor-gunner rather than an officer.

It was just this that made him truly great. He, an admiral, was a sailor at heart, and sailor-like he knew only one thing—that his Sevastopol must be defended to the last breath.

"We shall all die here!" he often said, always quite calmly.

And when a certain Lieutenant Butakov was killed at the battery that bore his name, he, an admiral, carried the coffin as only a father might carry the coffin of his son. Everyone in the fleet, officers and men, were the children of this old bachelor—if fifty-two can be considered old—and his purse was open to all.

To his own nephew, Captain Voyevodsky, however, who was his staff liaison officer, he often said in all seriousness: "I'm sick of you, utterly sick of you! What on earth do you keep bringing me all these reams of paper for? Six whole pages of it—they must think we have nothing to do

but read! It could all be said in two words. And now the thing has to be answered! The stupid dunderheads. How they have time for these wretched papers is beyond my understanding."

He always listened attentively to the men on the bastions if what they were telling him concerned the firing of the guns, or matters of routine that needed improvement; and often he would respond with a shake of his head and a "You're talking sense there, my son."

Sometimes it happened that Nakhimov would listen to a sailor for a time and then suddenly shout at him:

"Fiddlesticks, man! Poppycock! What you need is a good shaking for wasting my time!"

Soon after the assault of the sixth of June he ordered a sailor named Koshka to be transferred from the third bastion to the ship *Yagudiil* because of his incessant drinking.

"Let him sleep it off and come to his senses, or he'll turn the whole bastion into a pack of drunkards!" Nakhimov said to Rear-Admiral Panfilov. "Send for him in a week."

Convinced, however, that unboiled water in summer was bad for the health if not "laced" with red wine, he often sent barrels of wine to the bastions.

For the sick and wounded sailors in hospital he showed special concern; as often as not, he would give his own money to buy them what they needed rather than become involved in "scribbles."

A certain officer of the palace guard in St. Petersburg decided to pay Nakhimov an official visit. He arrived just as Nakhimov was coming out of his house.

"What put that idea into your head!" Nakhimov exclaimed when the officer told him why he had come. "How can we be bothered with visits now? I'm not such an interesting personage that you need worry about making my acquaintance. . . . But if you like, I'll show you the fourth bastion—a very interesting place. You can come and dine with me afterwards."

Nakhimov had never been called upon to lead soldiers in attack, as Khrulyev had, for example; he had never even learned how to give infantry commands. Nor had he ever been called upon to make speeches to soldiers; and, indeed, it might have been that he had no gift for those deep-felt yet merry phrases that some can say so well. He merely appeared every day among the soldiers on the bastions and at the redoubts. The soldiers saw him there, and that was enough for them to think of this tall, slightly stooped admiral with gold epaulets as *their* general—well, perhaps not exactly as a general, but at least equal to a general and much closer to them than any general.

They did not even refer to him as an admiral, and if a raw recruit asked an old soldier, "Who was that who went past with the epaulets on his shoulders?" the veteran would be sure to reply with a smile of approval, "Why, that's the one from the navy—Pavel Stepanovich. . . . He's the garrison commander's deputy."

Not all the soldiers knew for certain the surname of the admiral who visited the fortifications on his quiet grey horse, but that he was called Pavel Stepanovich was known to everyone who had been in the line for more than a day.

Vice-Admiral Novosilsky had been at the fourth bastion and Rear-Admiral Panfilov at the third from the very beginning of the siege. A few generals like Semyakin, Shulz, Prince Urusov, and others, had commanded various sectors of the line at various times; but Nakhimov was to be seen everywhere, nearly every day.

He seemed to have become part of Sevastopol's defences, part of the batteries, the redoubts, the arsenal, the port, the ships in the bays, the sailors at the guns, the soldiers in the dug-outs, the two-storey house at the corner of Yekaterininskaya Street where he lived and had his headquarters; and even the grey horse, which had carried him out of the confusion after the capture of "Kamchatka"¹ by the French, seemed part of himself.

Pavel Stepanovich Nakhimov, it would seem, was the last person whom Sevastopol could lose. Sevastopol without Nakhimov—it simply did not make sense. . . .

And yet, at the end of June, Sevastopol was left without Nakhimov.

III

It was June 28. Since early morning the enemy had for some reason been shelling Korabelnaya vigorously. The shelling abated towards mid-day, but two hours later it started afresh, the British being particularly zealous in their bombardment of the third bastion.

At this time Nakhimov was lunching, as usual, with his aides, and, as usual, in the company of these young men, he was merry.

He asked one of them, Lieutenant Kostyrev: "Now then, tell me why Nelson beat Admiral Villeneuve at Trafalgar?"

"He carried better guns," the plump-cheeked Kostyrev replied.

Nakhimov shook his head disapprovingly. "Not enough! Villeneuve's guns weren't bad either. . . . Guns alone couldn't account for it. . . . And what do you think?" he turned his eyes, twinkling with a child-like slyness, on another aide, Lieutenant Feldhausen, the most businesslike of his officers, for which reason all Nakhimov's money was in his possession. Feldhausen kept an account of the admiral's expenses, at which, incidentally, Nakhimov never so much as glanced.

"Most likely because he did not lose courage," Feldhausen replied promptly.

"Courage?" Nakhimov repeated.

"And for that I have none other than Goethe himself as my witness," Feldhausen affirmed gaily. This is what Goethe wrote: 'Who loses his wealth has lost nothing; wealth may be earned afresh. Who loses his honour may try to win fame; for with fame honour will be restored. But who loses courage has lost everything!'"

"Very good indeed! . . . Splendid about courage! But now here's a question for you: Why was it that Villeneuve and with him all his squadron lost courage?"

To this Feldhausen had no reply, and without asking the others—Koltovsky and Lieutenant-Captain Ukhtomsky, his senior aide—Nakhimov himself gave the answer in a clear, crisp voice:

¹ Fortification built by the Kamchatka regiment.

"Nelson won at Trafalgar because he carried every stitch of canvas. The French and the Spaniards lost courage because he took the wind out of their sails."

He smiled at his old joke and added: "As for you, gentlemen, kindly do not go away after dinner. I want to go down to the third bastion with you and see what's the matter there. . . ."

The aides glanced at one another, and Ukhtomsky said for all: "As it happens, we did want to go somewhere, Pavel Stepanovich."

"Did you indeed! Where, if I may ask?" Nakhimov exclaimed.

"We must make some preparations for your name-day tomorrow," said Feldhausen. "We have done nothing yet and there is hardly any wine left. . . ."

"Rubbish! Fiddlesticks! . . . My name-day! . . . A fine time to celebrate saints' days, I must say!" Nakhimov responded with unfeigned annoyance. "Who will come and see me on my name-day? Everyone is up to his eyes in work! . . . Of course, I don't need a lot of people with me, but you must stay, and you too," he turned to Koltovsky and Kostyrev. "We shall leave at five o'clock."

After lunch Nakhimov usually rested, for he was an early-riser. Added to this, after a few hours work without rest the injury to his back that he had received on that memorable day of May 26, when he was nearly taken prisoner, began to make itself felt. A splinter from an exploding shell had struck him flatways in the back. He had kept his feet and refused the medical aid that was offered him, but his back remained bruised for a long time, and the pain had not yet gone.

"Treatment! Bless you, no!" he would say to the doctors. "The only thing that keeps me on my feet is that I'm always busy. Why, if I ever allowed myself to start treatment, it would be the end of me. I mean it quite seriously. If they declared peace now, I should collapse with fever tomorrow. . . . Yes, and like as not, you would find me suffering from a dozen other diseases at the same time. At my age and my rank, a man may have anything! . . . Slacken his reins, and it's all over. . . . You couldn't cure me then whatever you did! A full admiral—the disease is quite incurable, believe me, with catarrh of the stomach into the bargain! I've been through that already. In 'thirty-eight, Prince Menshikov sent me abroad for treatment. They treated me, treated me for ten months or more did those Berlin doctors, then they held their consultation, and what was my sentence? No hope! Think of that! Absolutely no hope! . . . And so off home at once—if I had to die, better at home, than in Berlin. . . . But here I am, you see, still alive!"

Nakhimov needed no waking. He slept in his clothes, and woke at the hour he had told himself to wake. It was an old habit of his.

In a long black frock-coat that made him seem even taller than he was, with the faded gold epaulets on his shoulders, and a big white cross hanging from a ribbon round his neck, he emerged from his chamber, cheerful and refreshed by sleep, and clapping his white cap as usual on the back of his head, walked out with Koltovsky and Kostyrev to the saddled horses.

Koltovsky, contrary to his habit, was looking gloomy, and Nakhimov noticed it.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Nothing wrong at home, is there? Have you had a letter?"

"No, I haven't had any letters, but. . . Perhaps you won't go today, Pavel Stepanovich?" Koltovsky spoke in a pleading whisper, like a son to his father.

"H'm! And why shouldn't I?" Nakhimov asked, raising his left eyebrow in surprise.

"At supper yesterday . . . you spilt some red wine," Koltovsky muttered, staring down at his horse's fore hooves.

"Aha, so that's it!" Nakhimov smiled. "And it made a cross on the table-cloth—a bad omen! A young man like you, believing in omens! Rubbish! Fiddlesticks! . . . Get on your horse. . . . We have omens enough with cannon balls bouncing down Yekaterininskaya Street big enough to knock the house over. . . . Dmitri Yerofeyevich told us we ought to move over to the Nikolayev barracks—it's safer there. Bah, if you're going to be killed, you can be killed anywhere. . . . What was it we heard at dinner today? 'Who loses courage has lost everything!' Words of gold! Poor Totleben's getting worse and worse, and if we couldn't keep him out of harm's way, what's the use of talking about me? . . . Rubbish! Let's be off!"

Meanwhile the firing continued. They took no notice—they were used to it. But that did not make it any less dangerous. As the little party rode down to the bridge across the South Bay, a shell shrieked low over their heads, and Nakhimov said with a smile:

"There you are, they're welcoming us already!"

He even turned to see where the shell would fall, so alert were his senses as he started on that last journey to the bastions.

IV

On the third bastion, the firing had already died down, as it usually did towards the close of the day. Nakhimov's misgivings that it might develop into something serious passed off when he met Vice-Admiral Panfilov, commander of the third sector as he was going to his dug-out to have tea.

Panfilov, an imperturbable giant of a man, had become a vice-admiral only recently; he had been promoted to that rank for his part in repulsing the assault of the sixth of June. Vice-Admiral Novosilsky, also no weakling, but several times shell-shocked, had been obliged to ask for a rest, and had been transferred to a command in Nikolayev. Panfilov, however, seemed to live in an enchanted circle that no bullet, ball or shell-splinter dared penetrate.

His big hand was firm and warm as he clasped Nakhimov's, inviting him to have tea and nodding at the diligently polished and no less diligently steaming samovar which an orderly had placed at the entrance to the dug-out.

"No, Alexandr Ivanovich, thank you, my dear fellow, but I don't feel like it," Nakhimov replied to his invitation, and added: "But you go along, you need a rest, go along now. . . . Don't come with me, I know my way. . . ."

"I say, tomorrow's the Pavel and Pyotr day! Many happy returns of tomorrow, Pavel Stepanovich," Panfilov said affectionately, smiling with his grey-green eyes, and in so doing making them even smaller than they were already. He still did not release Nakhimov's hand.

"Yes, tomorrow's my name-day, it seems. I've heard about that already from my aides. . . . Happy returns of tomorrow, h'm. . . . Thank you, I'm much obliged. You couldn't come round tomorrow, if you have an hour to spare, could you? My officers are getting something up, some kind of feast—they want to give Sevastopol a surprise. . . . Come round, if you can."

"Certainly, Pavel Stepanovich, certainly, I'll get away somehow; it doesn't look as if we'll be having any attacks tomorrow from these. . . . Yes, we'll celebrate your name-day. And it's my bounden duty to see you round the bastion."

The good-natured giant flatly refused to take advantage of his commander's permission to rest and have tea. Nakhimov left his horse by the dug-out, and he and Panfilov went on together on foot.

The firing had died down, but shells were still flying back and forth, and the killed and wounded were being carried away on stretchers from which blood was dripping.

So as not to delay the over-zealous commander of the third sector, Nakhimov did not stay long. He only walked round the bastion and the batteries of Perekomsky, Nikonov, and Budishchev—the last was still called thus, although Budishchev had long since been killed. Nakhimov made a quick survey of the sailors at the guns to discover what losses his "family" had suffered, how many had been killed or wounded, what guns had been wrecked and needed replacement, what work on the defences was to be carried out that night. . . .

Having returned to the dug-out where the horses were waiting, and having at last taken leave of Panfilov, Nakhimov rode to the top of Malakhov Hill, intending afterwards to inspect the fifth sector, which included the second and first bastions.

Kornilov's bastion turned out to be comparatively quiet; there was firing, but it was very slack. That day the French were on the whole giving the British very little support. There were many bullets flying overhead, but it was not customary to take any notice of them, which was natural, of course—a heavy cannon-ball could do great damage and spelled death for any of the defenders of the bastion who chanced to cross its path; a shell from one of the siege mortars could rip as many as thirty men at once out of a group of soldiers; but a bullet, even if it struck its mark, only struck one man, and the wound was not necessarily fatal.

Since they had taken the Kamchatka, the French had pushed their sharpshooters forward till they were entrenched comparatively near the bastion wall, and among these dare-devils there were excellent marksmen who did not miss a single living target on the fortifications and were particularly assiduous in marking the embrasures.

True, the embrasures were covered with screens of rope as suggested by Captain Zorin, but even so chinks remained, and it was these chinks that the vigilant enemy kept their eye on.

When Nakhimov arrived at the bastion, evensong in the honour of Pyotr and Pavel was being held in the ruined tower, and Kern, the commander of the fourth sector, and most of his officers were attending.

At the sight of the admiral, Kern's orderly, the sailor Korotky, slipped into the tower to report his arrival; Nakhimov walked straight to the breastworks, took a telescope from a signaller at one of the

embrasures and looked to see what progress the French had made with their defences in the past twenty-four hours.

This work was proceeding steadily. Broad and narrow trenches were zigzagging towards Malakhov Hill, just as they had earlier, towards the fourth bastion, and Nakhimov, as he scanned the fresh strips of reddish earth thrown up by French shovels, reflected that Tottleben had been right to insist on laying minefields in the path of the over-resolute enemy, who in addition were extremely industrious, a quality in which they excelled the British.

As he hurried towards the breastworks, Kern noticed, of course, how dangerous the admiral's position was. The embrasures were the most vulnerable places on the bastion. He also knew, however, that the admiral could not bear any fuss being made about his safety. Suddenly he remembered that the following day was the admiral's name-day, and this gave him the idea of asking him to evensong in the tower, which was quite safe from enemy bullets.

He climbed up behind Nakhimov and saluted as if he were about to make a report.

"Your Excellency."

Nakhimov turned round.

"Ah, good day! Where were you?"

"At evensong, Your Excellency. . . . It's being held now, in the tower. . . . Would you not care to attend?"

Kern was confident that he had found an unbeatable excuse to get the admiral down from the embrasure, but Nakhimov answered condescendingly:

"Go and finish your hymn-singing. . . . I am not keeping you here. . . ."

Kern stared despondently at the admiral's back. His triangular cheeks were drawn with grief and alarm, for bullet after bullet was humming over Nakhimov's head, or thudding dully into the rope screen.

"All our officers would be delighted to see you at evensong, Your Excellency," he said hopefully, not even trying to guess how the admiral, who seemed out of temper, would react to his suggestion.

"Eh? Oh, yes, yes. . . . All right, I'll be over directly," Nakhimov grunted, still concentrating on the telescope, and repeated: "I am not keeping you here."

Kern dared not say straight out that it was dangerous to stand where the admiral was standing, for advice of this kind always annoyed Nakhimov. Also, the twice-repeated "I am not keeping you here" sounded rather like an order. He withdrew a pace and stepped down, whispering to Korotky to try his powers of persuasion on the admiral, who would forgive him for showing concern, because he was a sailor.

Korotky at once leapt towards the embrasure and stood where Kern had stood. Just as he did so, a bullet aimed at the admiral thudded into a sandbag at the opening, narrowly missing Korotky's elbow.

Nakhimov half turned. "Good shots, aren't they, the devils!"

"You'll get killed, Pavel Stepanovich!" Korotky shouted, his eyes bulging with anxiety. "Get down, for God's sake!"

"Not all bullets hit their mark, my son," Nakhimov responded calmly, but a moment later he handed the telescope to the signaller standing beside him.

Meanwhile, Kern had seized upon another means of bringing the admiral down from the embrasure; he ordered the gun-captain at the nearest mortar to open fire.

Kern was sure that Nakhimov would at once step down and go over to the gun to have a word with the gun-captain, an old sailor he knew well; but that was not what happened. On taking the telescope from the admiral, the signaller thought fit to clap it to his eye and watch what the Russian shell would do in the French trench.

"Oh, that's a daisy!" he cried. "Lifted three at once!"

Nakhimov, who had been about to leave the embrasure, turned to see for himself what had been the success of the mortar shot, but immediately fell backwards; a shot from a zouave had proved even more successful—it had deprived Sevastopol of its most important defender.

Korotky dropped to one knee and caught the admiral as he fell. Nakhimov's white cap dropped from his head and rolled off the embrasure step.

The bullet had entered Nakhimov's forehead above the left eye, passed through the brain and come out behind the ear.

V

As after the loss of a great battle, alarm spread through the town—"Pavel Stepanovich has been killed!"

Nakhimov was still alive at that time, but lived for nothing save to be the object of a universal solicitude that would avail nothing. Death already held the hero of Navarino, Sinop, and Sevastopol in its tenacious grip and looked with murderous calm upon the efforts of men to wrest him from its terrible embrace.

Beside themselves with grief, Koltovsky and Kostyrev argued wildly where they should take their admiral, to the dressing station at the Appolon gully or straight to town, to the Noblemen's Club. Kern, pale and horrified, his eyes full of tears, kept muttering: "To hospital, to hospital, to the North Side! . . . Gubbenet's there! He's a professor!"

But the sailors, lifting their "father" on to a stretcher caked black with congealed blood, carried him straight to the little dug-out of the bastion nurse Praskovya Ivanovna.

"O, Lord have mercy! . . . O dear God! . . . O my poor darling!" Praskovya sobbed and sighed, throwing up her big bare arms.

The sailors checked her sternly. "Leave the wailing till afterwards! Bandage him up quick! There's no time to lose with a thing like this."

Nakhimov's eyes were closed. There was no blood on his face; only a few drops of blood, mixed with brain, stained the blond curls at the back of his head.

Even Praskovya's powerful hands, accustomed to all wounds, trembled visibly as she applied the bandages.

"What think you? Will he live?" the sailors whispered.

They wanted to hear her usual reply, "Never mind, don't lose heart!" but they did not hear it. Praskovya only pressed her head to Nakhimov's breast, listened to the beating of his heart and, looking up, said: "Take him to the doctor, at the dressing station—let him decide. . . . O the monsters, the wicked monsters, what have they done! . . ." And abandoning all restraint, she wept as only a peasant woman can weep. . . .

Without waiting for the end of evensong, officers, sailors, soldiers crowded out of the tower and streamed after the stretcher that bore the still body of the admiral—the soul of the defence.

"What, wounded? Where? In the head? A bullet? . . . Oh!"

"Right through, they say! . . ."

"Right through the head? . . ."

Hands gestured in despair, eyes were lowered to hide tears of grief. Some of the officers tried to console themselves by recalling aloud Kutuzov's famous wound in the head from a Turkish bullet.

One of the officers even recited Derzhavin's lines on Kutuzov:

*Swift Death his head had cleaved
But his life no hurt received—
The Lord saved him for victories new!*

"And Kutuzov was wounded in the Crimea too," another officer thought fit to remark.

"Yes, here, in the Crimea, near the village of Alushta . . ." a third hastened to add.

"And most remarkable of all, gentlemen, Kutuzov was also wounded in the left temple, and the bullet came out by the right eye—that I remember well," said Lieutenant Pyotr Ivanovich Lesli, brother of Yevgeni Lesli, who had been killed when a powder magazine on the third bastion blew up during the first bombardment.

"And Kutuzov did not merely recover, gentlemen! He might have recovered and still have been deranged for the rest of his life. But he became Prince of Smolensk!"

"To be exact, he became Prince of Smolensk after another wound, also in the head!"

"Was he really wounded twice?"

"He was indeed! The second time when he was besieging Ochakov."

"But not in the head again?"

"Yes, in the head. The bullet entered below the cheekbone and came out at the back of his head. . . . The doctors were convinced he would die at any moment, but they were fooled again."

"I dare say Pavel Stepanovich's case may be the same. . . ."

They were glad to clutch at the merest shadow of hope, but meanwhile the doctors at the dressing station on the Korabelnaya Side had unhesitatingly declared that there was no hope.

Nakhimov's aides rode to town to report to Saken that the admiral was mortally wounded and to receive his order to seal the admiral's quarters at once. In the meantime, Pavel Stepanovich, his head now bandaged more skilfully than Praskovya had been able to do it, was being taken by the sailors across the bay to the hospital on the North Side.

It was still quite light when the wherry slid out over the smooth waters of the bay, where several sailing ships and steamers were anchored. Then something happened that the sailors at the oars had never expected—Pavel Stepanovich suddenly opened his eyes—both of them, although it was clearly an effort for the left eye. The gaze may have been a fixed one, but Nakhimov's blue eyes did gaze upon the sailors, on the sweep of the oars, on the water dripping from the blades. . . .

The sailors glanced at one another joyfully, fearing to speak. And in the middle of the bay, their wounded "father," perhaps under the influence

of the fresh air or the smell of the sea, even grasped the poles of the stretcher and tried to sit up. True, having made this effort, he dropped back weakly and again closed his eyes, but the sailors no longer merely exchanged glances; they nodded, as much as to say, "See what he's doing!"

From the deck of his ship, the *Vladimir*, Captain Butakov caught sight of a very familiar black frock-coat with rich epaulets, a bandaged head and a stretcher in the passing wherry, clasped his hands to his head and barely recovered his senses in time to order his steam launch, which at that moment was approaching the wherry from the North Side, to take the admiral aboard and convey him across the bay as quickly as possible.

Gubbenet was not at the hospital; he was attending Totleben, whose wound that had at first seemed light had now for some reason begun to look ugly. The leg was swollen, and Totleben, who, though confined to bed, was still giving instructions for the defence of Sevastopol, was wracked by acute pains.

To pass on his instructions Totleben always had two or three engineer officers in attendance, and he paid no attention when one of them entered the room just as Gubbenet was finishing the bandaging of his leg.

The visitor's face was very disturbed. When Totleben was not looking, he made signs to the surgeon to follow him out of the room. Gubbenet realized there was something important he must be told and went out.

The officer informed him in a whisper that Nakhimov had been killed and asked him to tell the general of this as tactfully as possible; he knew how Totleben respected and valued Nakhimov and was afraid that the terrible news of his death would have a disastrous effect on the wounded man.

Gubbenet himself was severely shaken by the news, although one might have thought that the three thousand amputations and other major operations that he had performed here, in Sevastopol, would have sufficiently hardened his heart. And he was overjoyed both for Totleben's sake and his own, when it proved unnecessary to pass on such grievous news; at that moment a messenger from the hospital reported that the admiral was not killed, but only wounded; he had been sent to fetch Gubbenet for a consultation.

The professor had to make a hasty journey from one hero of Sevastopol to another, but when he arrived in the separate ward that had been allotted to Nakhimov, the doctors already knew all they wished to know about the wound, had extracted from it eighteen splinters of skull-bone and arrived at the conclusion that death was inevitable and close.

In accordance with the habit that surgeons had in those days of pushing their fingers into wounds, they had discovered that the index finger could go easily into the hole where the bullet had entered, and that the exit hole was even larger.

Nakhimov looked at Gubbenet with his right eye; his left lid was closed and purple; his right hand was still, but his left moved, and he tried so hard to raise it to the wound that Gubbenet was obliged to stop him.

Speaking very clearly, Gubbenet asked him several questions, but in vain he lowered his ear to the admiral's lips—they did not stir.

"Unconscious," Gubbenet said at last, sadly, and started to remove the dressing that had only just been applied.

"Ice!" he said in such a peremptory tone that one might have thought this simple remedy could restore the wounded man to life.

"Ice has been sent for," the doctors replied.

"Where?"

"We have sent round the restaurants—perhaps they still have some left."

"Until the ice comes, wet compresses," Gubbenet ordered in the same peremptory tone. "Cold water to drink, in tea-spoonfuls."

Water without and water within was the only medicine for the wounded sailor. And that medicine revived him a little; he began to move his left hand more and more, he strove to open his left eye, and sometimes he succeeded.

A small piece of ice—the last—was found under a heap of wet straw in the cellar of the still undaunted owner of the "Rostov-on-Don" restaurant on Korabelnaya Side. It was carried to the hospital like a priceless treasure, and with enormous haste, in case it melted on the way. A legend was created on the spot that the ice had been obtained by one of Nakhimov's aides, Lieutenant Shkot, who had ridden to Simferopol and back for it, taking no more than seven hours for the whole journey; and everyone in Sevastopol believed it, because everyone wanted all possible measures, even the most heroic, to be taken in order to save Nakhimov's life.

But Death would not depart from his bed-side.

On the morning of his name-day, Nakhimov seemed to be so much better that he even wanted to tear his bandages off with his left hand. The doctor attending his bed-side guided his hand away and heard him mutter: "Good heavens, what rubbish . . . what nonsense!"

To the dying man all this concern and solicitude for his person could, of course, seem nothing but rubbish and nonsense.

Towards midday Gubbenet thought of another remedy—pouring water from a teapot held above the head of the dying man, so that the water, besides being cold, would exert an additional effect by falling.

Whether because of this drastic treatment, or because Nakhimov remembered it was his name-day and he must get up to receive his guests, he suddenly, to the surprise of those around him, sat up in bed.

And not only did he sit up, he even pointed at his neck, as if for a tie, and at his shoulders, for his frock-coat and epaulets; it was as if he had decided to become the Nakhimov he had been before, to show everyone around him that nothing had happened, that they had no business to stick their fingers in his skull and load his head with all these compresses and bandages.

But his revival did not last long. He lay back, now more on his right side than on his back, and closed his eyes.

Gorchakov and General Kotsebu arrived—one long and thin, the other short and round, the former very anxious, the latter calm, as became a chief of staff. When they entered the room, one of the army medical men was pouring a thin stream of water from a big china teapot over the head of the dying man. The pillow was wet, Nakhimov's shirt was wet, and drops of water glistened all over his pale face.

"Pavel Stepanovich!" Gorchakov said loudly, bending over the bed.

Nakhimov did not open his eyes.

"Pavel Stepanovich! . . . My dear friend!" the Commander-in-Chief attempted again in a trembling voice to draw an answer from the dying admiral, but the admiral did not hear, nor understand, nor open his eyes. *** And Gorchakov suddenly burst into tears. . . . Placing one hand on the plump shoulders of his little Chief of Staff, and covering his face with

the other, he uttered muffled sobs. His head shaking, his narrow back trembling, he wept unrestrainedly, for it was not just anyone who was dying, but the essential, irreplaceable leader of the defence of Sevastopol, that "accursed town," which perhaps held death in store for him too, but which could not be abandoned—duty would not allow that, Russia would not allow it. . . .

Meanwhile the zealous medical officer kept pouring cold water on the head of the dying man, trying to make him glance at the sobbing prince. And at last he was successful; Nakhimov opened his eyes and fixed them on the Commander-in-Chief.

"See! He's looking at you, your Excellency!" the medical officer exclaimed joyfully.

Gorchakov hurriedly wiped his eyes with a handkerchief and bent over the wet, fair-haired head on the wet pillow.

"Pavel Stepanovich! Pavel Stepanovich! . . . Do you recognize me?"

Nakhimov stared straight at Gorchakov's spectacles, he stared at them for quite a long time, for several minutes, but not a single thought showed in his eyes.

Gorchakov left the hospital, his face still stained with tears. No hope remained. If there was anything to be discussed, it was only the funeral of Nakhimov, and particularly the tomb, which was already filled by the coffins of three admirals—Lazarev, Kornilov, and Istomin—and would have to be enlarged to make room for the new coffin. . . .

Captain Butakov sent an amateur artist "to outline" the face of the man, who had allowed no artist to paint him when he had been well, vigorous and at the height of his fame, as he had been after Sinop; and now a dispassionate pencil outlined that pale, drawn, lifeless face with closed eyes, on which the only glimmer of brightness was the glistening drops of water that rested here and there in the sunken features, and the white bandage that swathed the head.

Only once had the artist Timm succeeded in making a furtive sketch of Nakhimov standing on a bastion; it was in profile, and perhaps more from memory than from life. And that sketch of Timm's is all that remains to remind posterity faintly of this hero.

The hero's life was waning before the eyes of the hospital doctors and of all who had time and opportunity to come to the North Side to look at him.

Now the doctors poured water over his head, now they changed his bandages, now they checked his pulse, now his respiration, but they themselves could see that this was only a matter of form, that his life was dwindling away through that hole in his skull, and that medicine knew no power to stop it.

At eleven o'clock, on the morning of the thirtieth of June, the sentry who had been posted in front of the barrack to stop all traffic that might disturb the wounded man was removed. There was nothing that could disturb him now—Nakhimov's heart had ceased to beat.

VI

At three o'clock that afternoon the body of Nakhimov was brought across the bay to the house near the Grafskaya pier which had been his permanent abode; at all events he had proved to Saken that there really

had been no need for him to move to the safe Nikolayev barracks—death had been awaiting him not in town, but at the post of battle.

All Sevastopol knew of the death of Pavel Stepanovich. There were few civilians left, but they stood out in the dense crowd which gathered round the pier to meet the funeral barge that had been towed across the bay by a steam launch.

The sea was rough and flecked with foam; the waves were running high even in the bay.

Panfilov, who had been appointed to Nakhimov's post as commander of the port and deputy commander of the garrison, together with three captains, carried the coffin from the barge to the house.

There the body was covered with the shot-torn flag which the *Empress Maria* had flown at the battle of Sinop, and the doors were opened to all who wished to pay their last respects to the admiral. There were so many that they filled the whole square, and more and more kept arriving every minute, singly and in groups.

The sailors alone took more than an hour to pass the coffin in double file. . . . Many women were there, although the dead man had done all he could to send all women out of town, in order to keep the casualties as low as possible; and many tears were shed over the body that lay covered by that austere flag of battle.

But the tears were not only those of women—Sisters of Mercy, the wives of soldiers and sailors from Korabelnaya Side, street vendors, washer-women, officer's wives and daughters. . . . The eyes of sailors and soldiers, officers and generals were wet, and Gorchakov wept afresh when he arrived to attend the funeral.

Was it for a hero they wept? . . . Perhaps it was for a man who managed to keep his warmth of heart, in spite of his rank and position in the fleet and in the beleaguered town, in spite of the atmosphere of siege, with its daily bombardment and frequent battles, an atmosphere in which any heart must harden, any soul grow numb.

Four months later, when St. Petersburg welcomed the convalescent Totleben, a poet of some reputation in those days, Apollon Maikov, in writing of him, could not but recall Nakhimov too:

*Nakhimov as a sailor fought,
His sailor's labour shall endure.
How great he was he never knew,
How great, how simple, and how pure.*

All day long the people of Sevastopol filed past the coffin.

Nakhimov was buried the following evening.

A field battery—six guns drawn by horses—took up its position on the square; two battalions—sailors on one side, soldiers on the other—lined the route from the house to the Cathedral of St. Mikhail. People crowded the Kazarsky Boulevard, the library steps, and every surrounding elevation. Never in its history has Sevastopol seen such a gathering. Even the enemy ceased their usual bombardment, although they must have seen the huge crowds on the square and in the adjoining streets.

There was a rumour that the enemy ships had dipped their flags as a tribute of respect to the victor of Sinop, and the occasion was so majestically solemn that everyone wanted to believe the rumour.

The coffin, draped with three flags—rear-admiral's, vice-admiral's and admiral's—was carried from the house to the cathedral by Nakhimov's bereaved aides, and thence, after the service, to the new tomb beside the old.

To the farewell thunder of cannon and thousands of rifles, the masons hurriedly sealed the tomb. . . . And only when it began to grow dark and the crowds had drifted away after the marching battalions of sailors and soldiers, were enemy incendiary rockets fired into the town one after the other. The gossipers had it that there were exactly sixty. They were very beautiful in their flight across the night sky, those costly but rather ineffectual weapons. They even contributed a share of solemnity to that evening of July 1; they were like funeral torches lighted by the enemy in honour of a hero of the Russian people.

Grim torches, it is true, they were, but the famous admiral who had utterly destroyed the Turkish fleet hiding in Sinop bay could not but seem grim to them.

And indeed, for all his kindness, he was grim both on sea and land when it came to matters concerning the fighting efficiency of his crews, but it was for that reason that he was such a master; it was for that reason that the fighting efficiency of Nakhimov's "children" astonished the world both on the sea and on the bastions of Sevastopol.

Translated by Robert Daglish



LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

VLADIMIR ZHDANOV

PISAREV ON AESTHETICS

DMITRI Pisarev appeared on the social scene at a time when profound changes were taking place in the life of feudal Russia. Peasant unrest, as yet for the most part hidden beneath the surface, was beginning to break through in the form of open revolt, finding an increasing response in the hearts and minds of the democratic intelligentsia. This was that famous period in Russian history, the 'sixties of the last century, which produced a whole generation of "new men," the democratic-minded intellectuals who ardently strove to abolish the old forms of society. It was the period when old established standards and values underwent a radical revision: The "new men," who came from all classes of society, took up arms against the cultural standards of the landowners, which were alien to the people, against reaction in politics, against idealism in philosophy and snobbish aestheticism in art. This powerful ideological movement was launched by progressive Russian journalists headed by Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and, later, by Pisarev.

Pisarev was born in 1840 in a family of gentle-folk. In 1856 he entered St. Petersburg University and two years later began to write for literary magazines. Upon his graduation in 1861 he became a regular contributor to the magazine *Russkoye Slovo* (The Russian Word). Before long he was arrested for writing a revolutionary proclamation containing inflammatory appeals against the government and imprisoned in the fortress of Peter and Paul, where he spent more than four years. Here, in solitary confinement, he wrote the major part of his literary and publicistic works, philosophical and popular scientific articles. His career lasted a brief ten years. In 1868 he was drowned while bathing in the Baltic near Dubbeln.

From the very outset of his activities Pisarev was caught up by the wave of social upsurge that swept his native land. He quickly rid himself of the youthful illusions of the Russian liberal and declared open war on conservatism, hidebound thinking and outworn tradition. On the pages of *Russkoye Slovo*, which thanks to Pisarev became the militant organ of the democratic movement, he came out as a worthy colleague of Chernyshevsky, the leading Russian revolutionary thinker of the age.

Pisarev was not as consistent and profound in his thinking as his great contemporaries Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. There was much that was immature in his political views, and his world-outlook was

based on mechanistic, metaphysical materialism. Nevertheless the significance of his contribution to publicistic writing cannot be over-estimated. It flourished to the full at a time when Dobrolyubov was no longer among the living and Chernyshevsky was incarcerated in Siberia. Pisarev at that time was almost the only remaining big figure in left-wing Russian journalism. In his first major work, an article entitled "Nineteenth Century Scholasticism," he openly ranged himself on the side of Chernyshevsky and levelled a violent attack on reactionaries for their preaching of idealism, mysticism and sundry other "mouldy rubbish," as he put it, which like the Egyptian mummies crumble to dust at the slightest whiff of air. He scoffed at the liberal writers who sought to "befuddle their readers by their book learning and close their eyes to living ideas, problems and interests." In his own writing he posed burning social issues of vital interest to his readers, such as the liberation of labour from the yoke of capital, the education of the popular masses, the emancipation of women, the relation of art to reality.

Pisarev's philosophical, publicistic and critical writings made a tremendous impression in their time. No one could fail to be moved by them: he imbued the youth with his own faith in the cause he championed, his own passionate devotion to the struggle. All that was stagnant and moribund feared his courageous pen.

The tremendous popularity and impact of Pisarev's articles were due primarily to the fact that they dealt with vital issues of Russian social progress and were a striking expression of the sentiments maturing among the progressive-minded intellectuals. This explains why Pisarev's works have survived the test of time. Rereading him today, particularly his articles on art, one cannot but be amazed at the power, freshness and nobility of some of the ideas they propound.

He advanced questions that to this day, a hundred years later, continue to agitate the minds of men; such questions as the inculcation of a conscious attitude to labour, of bringing up honest, public-minded members of society devoted to an exalted ideal; equality for women, a theme to which Pisarev dedicated many brilliant pages; the creation of a great and truthful art that would benefit man.

Pisarev taught his readers to think critically, to respect labour and scorn parasites; he kindled in men's minds the desire for knowledge, for learning, for a deeper understanding of the laws of nature. He never compromised with his conscience, admitted his mistakes frankly and honestly. Pisarev was always active, his searching mind was constantly advancing to new realms of intellectual discovery. All these traits laid their imprint on his work, on the priceless literary legacy he bequeathed to posterity.

His most brilliant writings were penned in prison. One cannot but marvel at the spirit of this man who, robbed of his liberty at the age of twenty-two, contrived to preserve a living contact with the outside world and the keenest interest in the life beyond the prison walls. What was the source of that inexhaustible energy, that amazing capacity for work, that cheerfulness of spirit, the power and freshness of ideas? Pisarev combined a powerful intellect and talent with rare courage. Neither hardship nor the dreariness of solitary confinement which cut him off from the activity for which his rebellious spirit craved could break him.

A host of articles on a wide variety of subjects flowed from his pen during his term of imprisonment. In little more than a year (from Novem-

ber 1864 to the end of 1865) he wrote nearly half a million words—a truly prodigious quantity. His work absorbed him to the exclusion of all else, it became, as he said, “a need, a habit and a delight.” The thought that his articles might be of service to society sustained him. “I often imagine my article being read somewhere in the remote provinces by some very young man who has lived in this world an even shorter time than myself and who still knows very little, yet longs to know more,” he wrote from prison. “And when I picture this reader, I am seized with a fervent desire to serve him to the utmost, to tell him as much as I can, to give him a thorough knowledge of all sorts of things, and what is most important to kindle in him the desire to take up some useful occupation. This is evidently reflected in the exposition of my articles and in the choice of subject-matter, and this makes my work a joy to me. Work ceases to be a purely intellectual occupation and becomes an emotional necessity. . . .”

There speaks the true writer, a writer not only by profession, but by vocation.

Independence, devotion to principle and to truth were Pisarev's distinguishing characteristics. There can be no doubt that every word he wrote came straight from the heart. All his writing has the ring of sincerity and deep conviction even when he was gravely in error. As a master of polemical writing he is almost unmatched. Few writers have been able to flay an opponent as mercilessly as Pisarev. Few have possessed the wit, irony and sarcasm such as that which Pisarev hurled at the proponents of views and opinions hostile to his own.

His articles stand as models of energetic and fiery criticism passionately concerned with the destiny of literature and the education of the reader.

Pisarev never wrote with calm detachment on any subject. When he loved, the intensity of his feeling could not but be communicated to the reader. Suffice it to recall the warmth with which he took up the cudgels in behalf of Bazarov, the hero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. It is no exaggeration to say that the image of Bazarov was created for many readers as much by Pisarev as by Turgenev.

When he hated, thunder rolled from his pen in words and phrases that annihilated his opponents. Here, for example, is how he described the inconsistency and falseness of bourgeois-landlord liberalism of the 'sixties: “The prime duty of the liberal consists, as we know, in declaring by every movement of his facial features, by every word and gesture his ardent and boundless devotion to those great ideas and interests which inspire him with somewhat the same emotions as Persian camomile inspires in a bug.” (“Humanity on the Upgrade.”)

No less biting was his sarcasm when he spoke of the devotees of “pure” poetry who abstracted themselves from contemporary problems: “Our lyrical poets,” he wrote, “nourish their vacuousness by feeding it the tiniest grains of ideas and emotions. . . . Like the humming bird they feed on the pollen dust of flowers. . . .” They clothe that “impalpable dust in the gossamer and motley-hued garment of iambs, choriambes and anapaests. . . .” (“Flowers of Innocent Humour.”)

Pisarev's articles and commentaries on art are of especial interest, containing as they do much of what is of permanent value in the striving for artistic perfection. Incidentally it was Pisarev's aesthetic views that were most bitterly attacked. The reactionary critics of his day sought to

brand him as a nihilist whose object it was to destroy art. Seizing upon some of Pisarev's extreme and erroneous views, they claimed that he preached the complete negation of art.

Pisarev was indeed guilty of a grave error in coming out with an article in which he tried to belittle the significance of Pushkin and to show that he was no more than the poet of the Russian aristocracy of the 'twenties and 'thirties. He overlooked the great poet's contribution to the emergence of national Russian culture. Lacking the dialectical method, he was unable to perceive Pushkin in historical perspective. He condemned him solely from the standpoint of that controversy that raged in the 'sixties around Pushkin's poetry which the apologists of "pure art" tried to use as a screen and justification for their pet theory that art must be divorced from life. The democrats denounced that theory as anti-popular in its very essence.

Pisarev, a bitter opponent of reactionary aesthetes, believed that by discrediting Pushkin he was depriving the "pure art" camp of one of its strongest arguments. Instead of showing Pushkin's true place in Russian letters as opposed to the false interpretation given by the "pure art" group, Pisarev in the heat of the argument, tried to minimize Pushkin's role altogether. He failed to see the profound realism and popular quality of Pushkin's poetry, he mistook Pushkin's portrayal of the world of the Russian nobility for a glorification of that world.

Having knocked down the "old literary idols," behind which the anti-realists were hiding, Pisarev came out in defence of the Gogol school of literature. In Gogol's work he saw a far more critical exposure of reality than in Pushkin's, and hence he considered Gogol to be of greater value in the development of the new democratic literature. In his article "Pushkin and Belinsky" he wrote: "One understands also why the panegyrists of Pushkin say nothing about Griboyedov and are not over-fond of Gogol. Both Griboyedov and Gogol are much closer to our present-day reality than to the silent bedchambers of the romanticists and philistines."

Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, too, highly appraised the "Gogol trend," but at the same time they considered Pushkin a great poet, the greatest indeed in Russian literature.

In Pisarev's view the only art that had a right to exist was an art that was useful and necessary to society, which helped men solve the cardinal and inescapable question confronting all honest, thinking men and women—the question of "the hungry and the unclothed." Accordingly Pisarev condemned art that turned its back on life and refused to influence reality. He was convinced that the true poet cannot sing of perfumed tresses and nightingales when people suffered and struggled around him. Perfumed "tresses" could not possibly satisfy the questing nature of such a poet. "How could he contrive in his creative quests to pass by that vast world of genuine human suffering, that thick dark wall that encloses us on all sides?" he exclaims. "... One can of course accustom oneself to these scenes of everyday life, one can dull one's mind and senses, one can imperceptibly bring oneself to a state of callous indifference to another's misery and hunger. ... But do not forget that we are concerned here with the poet, the artist, who is the most impressionable, the most tender-hearted, the most sensitive of beings. And if human suffering makes no impression upon him, where then is his sensitivity? If he can turn away with haughty

disdain from scenes of squalid misery and involuntary vice, to extol with lilting cadences the trilling of a love-sick nightingale, the sweet perfume of a rose in bloom, or the meaningless sighs of some comely miss, such sensitivity is as sickening and revolting as the tender devotion of old maids to cats, parrots and lap-dogs. Such a man is neither intelligent nor impressionable, passionate nor sensitive. And what kind of artist is that?"

Pisarev's enemies claimed that he was a destroyer of poetry. And it must be admitted that the critic was merciless when it came to poetry alien to the public interest, poetry uninspired by lofty ideals. He despised artists who were totally preoccupied with their own private emotions, who paraded before the public "in their dressing gowns" and who were apt to mistake "their cosy little nook for the great, the rich and multifarious world." Poets who went in for versifying, who did not know or did not want to know the great problems of wide and active world, who pretended to be deaf and blind in order to justify their canary-cage life and activity—such poets he called pygmies.

The Pisarev who dedicated so many wrathful lines to the exposure of the "pure" lyricists had, however, the highest opinion of Nekrasov. "I respect Nekrasov as a poet for his ardent sympathies for the sufferings of the common man, for the true word he always has to utter in favour of the poor and the oppressed. The man who wrote verses like *The Philanthropist*, *Epilogue to an Unwritten Poem*, *I Ride by Night* . . . can be assured that all that is alive in Russia knows and loves him." Are these the sentiments of a "destroyer of poetry?"

In his famous article, "Realists," Pisarev said that the true artist must give himself wholly to his art. Coldness and indifference are fatal to art. "The rhetorician and the poet have obviously nothing in common." Elaborating the idea further, Pisarev says that both the poet who "expresses the yearnings and sorrows of the whole modern world" as well as the tender lyricist who "sings in falsetto of perfumed tresses" can be equally sincere and devoted to their art. But in the first instance you have a Shakespeare, a Dante, a Byron or a Goethe; in the second, a Fet, whose work was of little value to the general reading public. Poetry of the second category, being limited in feeling and purpose, was worthless, the critic maintained.

Pisarev derided the absurd notion of art as something unconscious and abstract, and of the artist as a sort of superman. Pisarev fought for a new type of artist, the artist-citizen and democrat. A poet, he maintained, "is as much a member of society as anyone of us. When we meet a poet in a drawing-room, we have every right to insist that he refrain from putting his feet on the table and spitting at the ceiling." The poet is a man devoted to certain convictions, a man who is fully conscious of the purpose of his life and activity. "That goal beckons to him and urges him forward; he is happy when he sees it clearly and when it seems to come closer; he is transported with joy when he sees that others understand his all-consuming passion and themselves fix their eyes with eager longing on the same great and distant goal."

The writer, in Pisarev's opinion, must be a teacher and educator of society, whose mission it is to pour "floods of light and warmth" into the minds of men. In taking up his pen he is in duty bound to have a clear

conception "of the common objective to which his new work will be directed, of the impression it must produce on the minds of his readers, the sacred truth it must bring to them through its vivid depictions, and the harmful errors it will help to root out." This, the author's credo, expressive of his infinite love for literature and his desire to see it flourish, Pisarev applied in passing judgement on concrete literary works. He took delight in analysing contemporary writings in which he found confirmation of or support for his own views. One month after Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* appeared, Pisarev published a long article entitled "Bazarov" joyously acclaiming the novel's hero and giving a profound analysis of the social type he represented.

Pisarev realized that Turgenev, belonging as he did to the other camp, could not fully sympathize with the "new people," "he could only observe them from afar and note only those sides of their nature which they presented in conflict with people of entirely different mould." At the same time Pisarev regarded Turgenev as one of the finest representatives of the older generation, as an honest, realist artist who was incapable of misrepresenting reality or compromising with the truth. And from this the critic drew the right conclusion: "The honest, pure nature of the artist takes the upper-hand, breaks down all theoretical barriers, triumphs over intellectual blunderings, and atones instinctively for everything—for the fallaciousness of the basic idea, the one-sided development and the out-of-date conceptions. As he studies his Bazarov more closely, Turgenev, the man and the artist, grows in his novel, grows before our very eyes, rising to a correct understanding and appraisal of the type he has created."

In his articles on Bazarov, Pisarev gave some truly brilliant portrayals of the "new people," men of labour and science to whom the future belonged. He addressed himself with passionate conviction to the young generation, formulating their life programme, urging the youth to devote their energy to creative labour and conscious struggle for democratic ideals.

An even richer source of material for the elaboration of his views Pisarev found in Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*. Turgenev had been concerned with depicting only the negative aspects of the new people. Chernyshevsky, in Pisarev's view, being one of the "new men" himself, had succeeded in giving a fuller depiction of them. Hence in Chernyshevsky's novel "the new type rose to its full stature and stood out with that clarity and beauty which we find in the magnificent portraits of Lopukhov, Kirsanov and Rakhmetov."

Propagandist and champion of the theory of critical realism in Russian literature, Pisarev was at the same time the author of some valuable commentaries on Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, Goethe and other great Western Europeans. In each of these illustrious figures the Russian critic saw a spiritual leader of his people. He held in the highest esteem the French 18th-century Enlighteners—Voltaire, Diderot, Holbach, admiring them for the power and passion of their denunciations, their critical attitude to reality. "These men knew no hesitation nor felt the slightest pity or tenderness for that which they were denouncing and destroying."

Pisarev called Byron a "stormy and volcanic nature," "a true titan." But his favourite poet was Heine, and he was constantly returning to him. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that a man's entire intellectual development can be immediately gauged, depending upon how deeply he understands

the poetic works of Heinrich Heine. Heine is the most modern of world poets, he is closer to us than any of the others both in time and in the whole tenor of his emotions and ideas." In an exhaustive article analysing the poetic personality of the author of *Germany, a Winter's Tale*, Pisarev considers his work in the light of the development of world culture in the 19th century, stressing the revolutionary essence of Heine's satire and discussing in detail the contradictory elements in Heine's work.

Much of Pisarev's writing can still be of inestimable assistance in creating a progressive art, an art commensurate with the problems confronting peace-loving humanity today. What better confirmation of this can there be than these immortal lines penned by Pisarev himself:

"The truly 'useful' poet must know and understand everything that interests the finest and most enlightened minds of his age and his country. Comprehending the inner meaning of every pulsation of social life, the poet, as a man of passion and sensibility, must love with every fibre of his being that which he knows to be good, true and beautiful, and hate with a sacred, fervent hatred that vast mass of petty, wretched stupidity which prevents the ideas of truth, good and beauty from taking tangible shape and becoming the living reality. That love, inseparably bound up with that hatred, is, must be, the innermost core of the true poet's being, the only, the most sacred purpose of all his actions, of his entire existence."



POET, DRAMATIST AND TRANSLATOR

SAMUIL Marshak belongs to the older generation of writers who have long been prominent in Soviet literature. A poet, dramatist, translator and children's writer, he is widely known throughout the U.S.S.R. His books have been translated into fifty-six languages of the Soviet Union and foreign countries.

Marshak was born in Voronezh in 1887. Soon after, the family moved to Ostrogozhsk, where his father had obtained employment as a technician in a soap factory, and there Marshak spent his childhood and early school years.

The boy showed a deep feeling for poetry. At the school which he attended in Ostrogozhsk he attracted the notice of the Latin master, a man of culture and talent with a wide knowledge of Russian and world literature. To him Marshak went with his first literary efforts; and it was from him that he learned to love classic poetry.

When he was 13 years old, the boy left the sleepy provincial town for St. Petersburg. This was made possible for him by V. V. Stassov, the Russian literary and art critic.

Stassov had an important influence on Marshak's life. The distinguished scholar loved Russian art passionately and was ever seeking and encouraging all that was talented, vivid and new in Russia in his time. He took the boy to museums, art exhibitions, concerts by celebrated musicians. Marshak spent whole days in the St. Petersburg Public Library where Stassov worked.

In the summer of 1904 Marshak made the acquaintance of Gorky at the Stassovs' country home near St. Petersburg. Gorky took a deep interest in the young poet and watched his development closely. Marshak even lived at Gorky's home in Yalta for several years. When Gorky had to leave the Crimea because of the wave of official terror that followed the first Russian revolution, Marshak returned to St. Petersburg, intending to enter the university there. His plans did not materialize, however, and he went abroad to study in England.

At first he studied in the Regent Street Polytechnic and later attended lectures at the University of London. During his holidays he hiked, went to sea with fishermen, and at one time lived in a forestry school in South Wales. His numerous wanderings enabled him to absorb the language and the songs of the people. It was at this period that he began to translate English ballads.

In 1914, on the eve of the First World War, Marshak returned to Russia. He settled in the provinces, and there continued work on translations of English and Scottish ballads and classical English lyrics. Some of them appeared in the magazines *Severniye Zapiski* (Northern Notes) and *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought).

After the October Revolution Marshak participated in the organization of children's homes in Krasnodar. There, in a children's theatre that he founded together with a group of enthusiasts, mostly pedagogues, he took his first steps in juvenile literature, writing plays for children based on Russian folk-lore.

In 1923 Marshak returned to Leningrad. There he wrote his first fairytales in verse, translated English nursery rhymes (*The House That Jack Built*, for instance), compiled and wrote rhymes for picture books. At about that time the first Soviet magazine for children was founded and Marshak became its editor. Grouped around the magazine were the leading Soviet children's writers of that day, among them M. Ilyin, L. Panteleyev, B. Zhitkov, V. Bianki. Their work had the enthusiastic support of Maxim Gorky who had been giving much attention to the development of juvenile literature from the earliest years of the Revolution. Gorky played an important part in the establishment of the State Publishing House for Juvenile Literature and helped to draw up its lists of books for publication. He frequently wrote articles on educational problems and on literature for children. In all this organizational and pedagogical work Samuil Marshak was his invaluable assistant.

At the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 Marshak delivered a report on juvenile literature in which he formulated the new standards expected of children's writers and children's literature. Books intended for young readers, he pointed out, should help them to "discover" the world, should broaden their knowledge of the universe and of people, awaken lofty aspirations and noble emotions, teach them to love their native language and develop a taste for poetry. "We must bring our readers the world-outlook of people who struggle and build; we must bring them true culture," Marshak said.

Marshak is a writer of the Gorky school, a writer who believes in man and in the beauty and joy of peaceful, honest labour, who loves his country, is a champion of peace and has wide and varied interests. His literary work is highly appreciated in the Soviet Union, and in token of that appreciation he has been awarded the Order of Lenin, the Order of the Patriotic War, and the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. He is the recipient of four Stalin Prizes, one of them for his translation of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Among Marshak's first works for children were rhymes for picture books. The vivid and fanciful images they produced together with the pictures were understandable to nursery-agers and stimulated their imagination. The simplicity, brevity and humour that characterized all Marshak's subsequent poetry for children were evident in these rhymes.

Marshak possesses the gift of widening a child's horizon, of enlarging his picture of the world. He has an excellent approach from the pedagogical point of view. He "plays" with his small readers and, playing, imperceptibly teaches them a great deal. His poems about postmen, firemen, pilots, doctors, type-setters, porters instil respect for people who work, whatever their job. Marshak has composed a "living alphabet" which shows what a multitude of paths life has to offer. This is done easily and simply, the democratic principles and equality of professions fitting in

perfectly with the structure of the alphabet: every letter is indispensable and, naturally, Rodion—the Riveter, Sonya—the Seamstress, and Tolya—the Tractor-Driver stand side by side in the alphabet of life too.

The poet strives to make his reader feel the melody of words, to enrich his vocabulary. He introduces new concepts into the child's life, reveals the meaning and value of each word, conveys the charm of word-play, the rhythm of verbal combinations, the music of verse. A play upon words, however, is never an object in itself, a mere verbal and rhythmic exercise; it is always linked up with the main point of the given poem. Even the shortest verse or the most lyrical poem has a "plot"; something always happens; there is always action. Marshak has written poems for boys and girls of all ages, accompanying them, as it were, through their childhood.

Sincere admiration of human skill is characteristic of Marshak's poetry. He glorifies work, life, good will. His poems are pervaded by a natural and active human striving for happiness and joy. His verses for children are vigorous, buoyant, full of fun.

Marshak is one of our foremost translators of poetry. He translates poems from the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Uzbek and from the languages of the People's Democracies, but most of his translations are from the English. It is not too much to say that in his translations the Soviet reader has rediscovered the sonnets of Shakespeare and the wonderful poetry of Burns. He has translated Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Kipling. And all his translations are amazing for their exact reproduction of the mood and the rhythm of the original. This remarkable ability to capture the spirit of the original is notable in his translations of Burns (*Tam o'Shanter*, for instance) and of Keats' sonnets.

Marshak has also translated numerous verses and songs for children. Not long ago he "discovered" the young Italian poet Gianni Rodari. One need only name the titles of a few of Rodari's verses to understand their unique appeal to Marshak—"How Different Trades Smell," "The Man on the Crane," "The Fisherman," "The Tin-Smith," "The Knife-Grinder," "The Postman," "The Chimney Sweep," "The Fireman," "The Shoe-black," the humorous "Lazy-Bones," "A Roof on a Stick" (umbrella). Thanks to Marshak, Soviet children have learned to love Rodari's verses which bring us a vivid picture of the Italian people and their children.

Marshak's translations of children's verses are part and parcel of his creative writing for small children. He adheres to the same principles of economy and precision of words, maximum clarity and simplicity; he shows the same preference for vigour and energy, for a brisk and cheerful mood; he achieves the same faultless melody. Many of the means of expression he uses in translation were evolved in the course of his work as a children's poet. And after working on translations he always returns to original composition the richer for his work on other poets, especially the classics.

Marshak's work as a dramatist is closely related to his work as a translator and children's writer. His plays are mostly based on themes from folk-lore. But he does not merely repeat the folk tale; he enriches it. A graphic illustration of this is *The Twelve Months*, a play in verse based

on a Czech fairy-tale. Into the traditional story of a girl persecuted by her stepmother, Marshak has introduced new notes. It is not as a reward for submission and obedience that a miracle is performed for the stepdaughter—making Spring come in January so she can gather the snowdrops she has been sent for. It is the girl's cheerful industriousness, courage and staunchness that win over the inflexible laws of time. All the twelve months know this daughter of the people "personally." They have seen her constantly at work in the fields, in the forest, around the house. She never hides from them in either bitter frost or sweltering heat. She is not afraid of them, and at a difficult moment they come to her rescue.

Contrasted to the simple girl of the people is the capricious and spoiled little princess, unburdened by cares or work, surrounded by people who obey her every wish. Wittily and subtly Marshak shows how the princess is taught sense by the plain people and not by her hypocritical and cowardly courtiers. The vein of satire introduced by the poet livens up the action and emphasizes the idea of the original tale.

The Cat's House, a play for the tiniest spectators, is enjoying great success at the Puppet Theatre. This very brief comedy succeeds in ridiculing egoism, stupidity, conceit, greed, shallow love for one's belongings, in other words, human shortcomings and vices which are very tenacious and which children should be guarded against.

The Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow recently produced Marshak's latest play, *To Fear Sorrow Is Never To Know Happiness*, suitable both for adults and for children. Actually this is a realistic comedy in which the fantastic element, as in all genuine folk-lore, is no more than a hyperbolic picture of life's forces and potentialities.

To Marshak the lore of the people is an inexhaustible well-spring of true poetry, of wisdom, simplicity and humour.

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

ALLA SARUKHANYAN

SEAN O'CASEY IS SEVENTY-FIVE

SEAN O'CASEY, dramatist, novelist and publicist, one of the leading figures in English letters, recently celebrated his 75th birthday.

The distinctive features of this writer's life and work must be regarded in the light of developments in Ireland at the turn of the century, which was the period of his boyhood. Sean O'Casey's interest in public affairs was awakened at a very early age, and he took an energetic part in the Irish people's struggle for national liberation. His ideological outlook was also greatly influenced by the October Revolution in Russia, which he welcomed with sincere joy.

Sean O'Casey was already 40 years old when the Abbey Theatre in Dublin produced his first plays (*The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars*). That was in the 'twenties. His spirit had been steeled and his talent had matured in the hard school of labour, poverty and struggle. Even these early plays revealed him as a profoundly national artist, an exponent of the progressive ideas of his day, and in this direction his unusual talent continued to develop.

A consistently democratic outlook, a thorough knowledge of the life and conditions of the Irish working people, superlative skill in writing and a marked national flavour are characteristic of all Sean O'Casey's works. This ensured his plays, and later his novels, popularity among the common people of his country for whom and about whom they were written.

Never breaking with Ireland and always remaining loyal to her finest cultural traditions, Sean O'Casey has considerably influenced the development of contemporary progressive English literature. His ideological and aesthetic views, expounded in a collection called *The Flying Wasp* and in various articles, have found expression in his writing. He stands for an art that has its roots in reality and gives embodiment to high ideals; he sharply opposes anti-realistic trends in art, considering them deeply hostile to the people. With regard to English drama, he advocates the development of a people's theatre and is himself one of its most energetic organizers.

Whereas his early plays often contained pessimistic overtones, his later dramas are marked by a stronger line of criticism and denunciation of social evils hand in hand with increased optimism. He frequently resorts

to the grotesque in portraying satirical characters but to them he contrasts his heroes—simple men and women, honest working people. In this respect his portrait of Ayamonn, the hero of *Red Roses for Me*, is a significant artistic achievement. Ayamonn, who is a dreamer by nature and has blind faith in the good will of the bosses and the possibility of class harmony, is gradually disillusioned and comes to understand the necessity of fighting for his rights. The author shows the close relation between Ayamonn's development and the growth of the working-class movement.

The six-volume autobiographical series—*I Knock at the Door* (1939), *Pictures in the Hallway* (1942), *Drums Under the Windows* (1945), *Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well* (1949), *Rose and Crown* (1953), *Sunset and Evening Star* (1954)—that O'Casey has been working on since the end of the 'thirties is a valuable contribution to progressive English literature. Each volume deals with a definite stage in the life of the hero, Sean Casside, and in Ireland's social and political development. In the sixth volume *Sunset and Evening Star* the author gives much space to the description of his encounters with Bernard Shaw. This friendship played an important part in O'Casey's life, and it is also mentioned in *Rose and Crown*, the action of which takes place not in Ireland, as in the previous volumes, but in England and America. Writing of the difficulties—including material ones—that he encountered in his work during those years, O'Casey gratefully recalls the moral support Shaw gave him.

Sean Casside's life is closely linked with the life of his people. Brought up among the Dublin poor, the alert-minded, sickly youth encounters numerous difficulties; he surmounts them all courageously and in his mature years becomes a writer determined to draw a truthful picture of the sufferings and struggles of millions of his brothers. Sean resolutely defends his views on the purpose of art, refusing to submit to the canons of decadent literary circles that hold aloof from life or to accept their idols. Convinced that he is right, he boldly parries the attacks of the aesthete Yeats, who had great influence among London and Dublin literary circles.

Publicistic writings are an important part of Sean O'Casey's work, and in this field, too, he is invariably a splendid literary artist. His articles for the press are charged with emotion ("Letter to Moscow Friends," "Why I Would Ban Atom Weapons," etc.). Believing fervently in the power of unity of the peaceable peoples and in the final victory of the cause of peace, he wrathfully exposes the warmongers. In his message to American women he writes:

"Let it be life that ye chose, but it cannot be life triumphant till war is banned from the thoughts of men, and want is lassoed out of life forever.

"... The young want to grow old, and they have the right to grow old.

"It is a foul and unnatural thing for a mother to bend over a dead daughter; for a father to be digging a grave for a son.

"It is a noble thing to be healthily old; a gracious thing to look back on a life well spent in the service of brother man."

Sean O'Casey's novels of recent years reveal the confident hand of a master. Despite serious illness, the talented writer is at the height of his creative powers and is carrying his broad plans into effect.

Sean O'Casey can look back with pride on a life well spent in the service of man. His Soviet readers sincerely rejoice over his fresh achievements and wish this ardent peace champion and old friend of the Soviet Union many more years of fruitful work.

A PLAY BY KAZIMIERZ BRANDYS

NO ONE familiar with the work of that gifted Polish writer, Kazimierz Brandys, can fail to remember the town which he designates as P. The town of P. is the home of the leading characters in his *Between the Wars* tetralogy. It is there that many of the most dramatic episodes of these four novels take place. Some of the people in his new book, *Citizens*, are also connected with this big industrial town, the scene of fierce class struggle about the turn of the century, a town where whole generations of the revolutionary proletariat grew up and where reaction raged with especial ferocity. The reader sees this town at different times and in different aspects, but always it is a typically Polish town, in which the throb of the Polish people's heart can clearly be heard.

And as the scene of his play, *Just Men*, whose action takes place during the Revolution of 1905, Brandys has also chosen the town of P.

When on a visit to Moscow recently, the Polish author, at the request of his Soviet colleagues, described the history of his writing this play.

Brandys was born and spent his childhood in Lodz, an industrial centre whose whole history has been bound up with the revolutionary struggle of the Polish working class. All around him in his boyhood were reminders of the class battles that the proletariat had fought. And from the very outset of his literary career he hoped one day to write a book about his native town and the part it had played in the momentous events which Lenin described as "a dress rehearsal" of the October Revolution. As for the actual idea of *Just Men*, it came to him when he was studying the records of the life and work of Felix Dzerzhinsky, who was one of the closest associates of Lenin. And although Dzerzhinsky does not actually appear in the play, one is aware throughout of his presence; every moment one can feel his directing hand, his revolutionary will, his intimate bond with the masses. It will probably be no exaggeration to say that in the writing of his play Brandys was inspired by the figure of this fine Polish proletarian revolutionary.

The historical background is reproduced in *Just Men* with scrupulous accuracy, the alignment of class forces is distinctly revealed; but while the characters and their surroundings are thoroughly authentic, the play is not a historical chronicle in the exact sense. Except for Dzerzhinsky, who, as we have said, does not actually appear on the stage, the people in it are fictitious, and the town of P. is not a replica of Lodz, but rather a composite picture of a Polish industrial town. In fact, *Just Men* is closest in character to the type of play Gorky called "scenes from life"; and Brandys himself has said how much he owes to the dramaturgy of Gorky, which he has long known and loved. The influence of Gorky is to be seen not only in Brandys' choice of form, but in the strictly realistic handling of his theme: even where his satire is sharpest, it never lapses into the gro-

tesque, and in his stage directions he expressly cautions producers against giving the play a grotesque slant.

The central idea of the play is the maturing of the proletarian revolution, the workers' preparation for its decisive battles. The action unfolds along several lines: from the mansion of the mill-owner Kraus it switches to a workers' barrack and to the secret meeting-place of the terrorist conspirators in the Right Wing of the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.). We see two opposing camps—on the one hand, the workers on the eve of the general strike; on the other, the employers and the powerful government machine bent on suppressing the movement of unarmed working folk, who are fighting for the right to live like human beings.

Brandys' hero, the man who stands in the centre of the conflict, is the young worker Janek Wysocki, and in him the characteristics of a revolutionary fighter are most forcefully personified. The two opposing worlds in Brandys' play might be described as the world of the Wysockis and the world of the Krauses. Wysocki figures in only three scenes out of seven; but all the dramatic high-points of the play are connected with his appearances; he is, as it were, its driving force. These few scenes suffice to bring out the force and magnetic attraction of Wysocki's personality, and to show quite clearly what his path in life is now and will be in the future.

A worker in Kraus' fulling-mill, Wysocki was thrown into prison when little more than a youth. The pretext for his arrest was a clash which he had with Kraus' stool-pigeon Budny; but actually the management had only been waiting for an opportunity to get rid of this "trouble-maker." In prison he came to know Jozef (Dzerzhinsky), and under Jozef's guidance he went through a real political schooling. Five years later, when we are introduced to him, he is already a man of firm, mature convictions, a member of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, which worked in close contact with the Russian Bolsheviks.

One of the merits of Brandys' play is its vivid portrayal of proletarian internationalism. The author shows very convincingly, in full conformity with historical truth, that the Polish workers in 1905 did not act only on their own, they were acting in concert with their brothers in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Odessa and Baku. Furthermore, he stresses that the Right Wing of the P.P.S. was already at that time betraying the workers. Among other things, its representatives attempted during the Russo-Japanese War to strike a bargain with the Japanese militarists under the demagogic slogan "Our enemy's enemy is our friend." ("Yes, we know," Wysocki says about this, "two gentlemen have gone to ask one emperor for arms against another emperor. It's the workers that are fired on afterwards from arms like that.")

Wysocki returns to his native town when relations between workers and owners have reached the utmost pitch of tension and all compromise is already out of the question. The Party sends him there to explain the right policy to the workers and to arrange with the P.P.S. representatives for united action.

This brings us to the second conflict of the play—the revolutionary worker Wysocki comes into collision with the political adventurer Andrzej. The leader of one of the fighting squads of the P.P.S. nationalist Right Wing (which played such a traitorous part in the history of the Polish working-class movement) Andrzej has an important part in the

action. Like Wysocki, Andrzej is a typical figure, though of a very different kind. By depicting his criminal, provocative behaviour and the double-dealing of the P.P.S. representatives, Brandys helps us to understand the real alignment of political forces at the time.

A declassed intellectual (he aspired to be an artist), a demagogic *poseur* who wants to be thought a demonic superman—such is Andrzej, whom some simple souls invest with the aureole of a hero. He despises the workers; in his eyes they are a sheep-like, ignorant mob. The fight against tsarism is for him only a stepping-stone in his career, and all organized action of the masses is as unwelcome to him and to other demagogues of his kind as it is to the bourgeoisie.

The utter infamy of Andrzej is revealed in his feverish efforts to prevent the strike, which would be bound to develop into a powerful political demonstration. He slanders Wysocki, trying to undermine the workers' confidence in him; through Kraus, he denounces Wysocki to the gendarmes; finally he organizes the assassination of the Governor, for the express purpose of bringing down a fresh wave of reprisals on the workers and thwarting the strike in that way.

A bourgeois nationalist, a politician who will stoop to the foulest means to achieve his personal objects, Brandys' Andrzej is a direct forerunner of the fascist Armia Krajowa cut-throats.

Yet, for all Andrzej's cunning and tricky manipulations, it is not he that emerges the victor in the encounter with Wysocki. Victory is with him who has history on his side. We know that many a dark day still awaits Wysocki and his friends, that many an ordeal is still in store for them; but the stirring finale of the play, with the rising workers' mighty song of revolution, is instinct with the conviction of their ultimate triumph.

A fine master of psychology, Brandys has created real, flesh-and-blood men and women even in the many episodic characters who together make up the historical background of the play. Each of them, however few his lines, has his distinctive personality, his own, peculiarly individual traits. Thoroughly three-dimensional, for instance, is Wysocki's mother, a woman of the people, whose life has been spent in hard work and for whom the cause her son is defending is her own cause too. It is the same with the veteran worker Sznajder and his young companion Klimek, with the conductor on the horse-tram line, and with many others. Also clearly individualized are the men in Andrzej's fighting squad, who, while they still implicitly obey the word of their "chief," are yet beginning to be assailed by uneasy doubts.

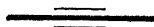
Anxious to present the fullest possible picture of the period, Brandys has drawn the Kraus *ménage* to a rather clearly apparent, one might even say mathematically computed, plan. There is Kraus himself, a typical bourgeois money-maker; his wife, the daughter of a ruined landowner, who despises her "parvenu" husband and only married him for his money; his brother-in-law, that degenerate scion of the nobility—a gambler and wastrel who lives by sponging upon him. There is his daughter, an "exalted" young lady weary of the stifling atmosphere of her home and thirsting for excitement; out of sheer boredom she is capable of impulses that sometimes have catastrophic results (as when she introduces Andrzej into the Kraus mansion and unwittingly helps him to assassinate the Governor). And, lastly, there is Kraus' son, an honest,

thinking but helpless lad, all of whose sympathies are with the workers, but who has not the strength of mind to resist his family. But while the plan does stand out rather obviously, Brandys has executed it with his characteristic craftsmanship. In his portrait of the Krauses we see both artistic generalization, the creation of types, and fine skill in the delineation of individuality. Each member of the household is a living, authentic human being, and even in the smallest parts, the actor has what to act.

The one flaw in this well-written play, perhaps, is the revolting figure of Budny—the butler and confidential agent of Kraus. A one-time worker and now the boss's watchdog, a spy by his very nature, Budny has something in common with the elder Szarlej in *Between the Wars*. But the similarity is largely biographical. The adventurer Szarlej did have external charm and the candour of an all-engrossing egoism, which the author found not altogether unsympathetic. In fact, many considered Brandys' treatment of his Szarlej to be so indulgent as to constitute a fault. Budny is both inwardly and outwardly repulsive. But here the writer goes to the other extreme. He lays on the repulsiveness so thick that in spots the character ceases to be real, he seems like the traditional stage villain, and nothing more.

Polish critics have already noted that, although historical in its subject-matter, *Just Men* is distinctly a play of today. In delving into the heroic past of the Polish proletariat, the writer has not avoided the present, but has shown us our own time too through the prism of the facts of history.

We have known Kazimierz Brandys as the author of interesting novels and essays. The success of his first effort in the drama bears testimony to the scope and versatility of his talent.



ALOIS JIRASEK—HISTORICAL NOVELIST

THE works of Alois Jirasek (1851-1930), a master of the historical novel, marked a new stage in Czech literature.

Jirasek first appeared in print in the middle 'seventies, and in the 'eighties and 'nineties he reached the zenith of his literary career. It was the period when the search for forms of struggle for the Czech people's national and social freedom constituted the most burning issue of the day.

And it was precisely the urgency of that issue that prompted Jirasek to draw on the history of his country for his writings. Many years afterwards, when the writer reflected on his creative work, he formulated its essence in the following way:

"I tried to breathe life into my country's past, to bring it nearer to us. There was nothing in that of the dreamer's desire to escape from the present and ignore the grim struggle waged by my people. I knew I had to turn to my country's past just because I was heart and soul in that struggle, for he who does not know yesterday, does not understand today. . . . In the chain of Life the links of the present are inseverably connected with those of the past. And not all in that past is dead. The fighters may be gone, but the fight goes on."

His immediate predecessors and older contemporaries—Josef Kajetan Tyl, Bozena Nemcova and Jan Neruda—had already voiced the people's impassioned protest against the tyranny of the Hapsburg rule. But their leading characters, though representative of the people, had more often than not engaged in single combat with the oppressors and in their fight for national liberty failed to enlist the masses.

Jirasek's heroes, who embody the finest traits of the Czech national character, are first and foremost fighters for freedom. The writer particularly stresses their close unity with the masses whom he depicts as the main motive force of history, as its true creators.

In the late 'eighties Jirasek completed his long series of epics on the period of the Hussite Wars, and his novels on the Czech national revival at the turn of the 18th century. These vast historical narratives contributed greatly to Czech realistic literature. The genre found its further development in the works of Jirasek's younger contemporaries and successors: Ivan Olbracht, Marie Majerova, Marie Pujmanova. These writers' novels, which can be called the chronicles of our times, treat of a new stage in the Czech people's history when at the head of the national-liberation movement in the country appeared its most progressive class—the proletariat.

Alois Jirasek was born on August 23, 1851, in a small village of Hro-nov, near Nachod, in the family of a rural artisan. In the past the Nachod region had been famous for its peasant uprisings. The stories of the struggle

of the peasants against the landlords were handed down from generation to generation. These stories together with various documentary material collected in his native parts served Alois Jirasek as a source of inspiration for many of his works, including his first historical novel, *Skalaci*.

On finishing school in Hradec Kralove, Jirasek entered the history section of the Philosophy Faculty at the Charles University in Prague. While still an undergraduate there, he spent a great deal of time in its historical archives doing independent research on the momentous stages in the life of his people. Jirasek showed an early interest in literature. Even as a schoolboy he began reading the works of the Russian classical writers. Years later, he wrote in his reminiscences about the powerful impression Gogol had made on him. To him the heroism of a combatant people could have no better artistic embodiment than in the figure of Taras Bulba.

From the very outset Jirasek emerged as a realist writer. His first collection of stories entitled *Tales of the Mountains* showed him to be an ardent champion of the brave and hard-working peasants whom he portrayed truthfully, without any idealization. His characters are prone to the corrupting influence of money which breeds mutual suspicion and bitter envy in people. At the same time, however, he shows that there are strong and courageous people who will not succumb to social injustice and the hard conditions of life, that a pent-up feeling of protest against all the unjust ways of life is brewing among the village poor.

His novel *Skalaci* (1874) brings to life an episode in the history of the Nachod region, which took place at the end of the 18th century. The local peasants, brazenly robbed and inhumanly mistreated by the lord of the castle, Piccolomini, are finally driven beyond the limits of their endurance. Craving for vengeance, they rise against their enemy under the leadership of Jiri Skalac. The writer does not gloss over the weak points of that spontaneous uprising, though he is heart and soul on the side of the peasants and resolutely believes in the triumph of their righteous cause.

Zdenek Nejedly, member of the Academy of Sciences of Czechoslovakia, who devoted long years of his life to the study of Jirasek's literary legacy, wrote: "I think that in the whole of our literature there is no other work which gives a more stirring picture of a peasant uprising against the landlords and shows such profound compassion for the insurgents and an equally profound hatred for the landlords than *Skalaci*."

Jirasek once again turned to the theme of peasant uprisings in his novel *Psohlavci* (1883-84), which won immediate popularity and was translated into many languages even in the writer's lifetime. The main theme of the novel revolves around the conflict between two antagonistic classes: the free peasants working on the land and the exploiting nobility. The characters are grouped accordingly: some are headed by the landlord Laminger who hates the peasants and does everything he can to enslave them, the others—by the peasants Kozina and Pribek who staunchly fight for their rights.

Pribek harbours no illusions that Laminger will concede to the peasants, or that the peasant delegation to Vienna will obtain a just decision. He calls on the peasants to take justice into their own hands.

"We keep silent when the noblemen raise our rent," he says, seething with indignation. "We keep silent when they beat us and grab our woods. And we still keep silent when they fell our boundary trees and steal our land!"

Pribek becomes the leader of the uprising and dies the death of a hero with the peasant banner in his hands.

No less tragic is the fate of Kozina. His trust in the landlords and a belief that the peasants can come to an understanding with them end in his falling victim to this gullibility. The writer shows that there can be no peaceful settlement of the conflict—a "reconciliation" is immediately followed by executions and an even fiercer exploitation. However, the author is not sufficiently consistent in his support of a fight-to-the-end policy. In his interpretation it is not Pribek but the martyr Kozina who becomes a truly popular hero. Despite the author's unsteady position on this cardinal issue, it does not minimize the main impact of the novel—a call to active resistance.

The trilogy *Amid the Currents* (1886-1890) treats of no isolated events but mirrors a continuous period in the Czech people's history—the beginning of the Hussite movement. This theme finds further development in the three-part epic novel *Against All* (1893) in which Jirasek created a whole gallery of unforgettable characters: peasants, artisans, petty noblemen. These people take up arms against the Czech feudal lords and King Sigismund's armies sent by the Church of Rome to "deal with the heretics." The attention of the writer is focussed on the people, the peasants who leave their homes and come to the new town of Tabor, the Hussite centre, to join forces against the landlords.

The scenes devoted to the building of that free town show how great is the people's love of labour and how inexhaustible their creative abilities. The action reaches its climax in the battle of Prague with the people emerging victorious over their foes. The valour of the Hussites, who fight for their right to their own land, for freedom and for life itself, stands out in bold relief when compared with the cowardice of the mercenaries who flee in panic before the onslaught of the Taborites.

Jan Zizka, a talented military commander, and the leader of the Hussites, is one of the best drawn characters in the novel. He is a man of great heart and daring decision, a clever strategist and a good organizer of the masses. The character of Zizka is presented in action and that determines its realism. Zizka does not only prepare his armies for battle, he himself takes part in that battle, remaining on the field from first to last, and helps to decide its outcome.

The message of *Against All* was highly significant for Jirasek's contemporaries. Historical facts helped the writer to explain why the representatives of the ruling classes, in pursuit of personal gain, are ready to betray the interests of their country and reach agreement with foreign invaders.

The same ideas dominated Jirasek's dramaturgy. His plays *Jan Zizka* (1903), *Jan Hus* (1910-1911), *Jan Rohach* (1913-1914) showed these historical figures as loyal patriots, implacable toward the enemy and unswervingly faithful to their country and people. The characters of these Hussite leaders, revived by Jirasek strictly in keeping with historical truth, proved the fallacy of the viewpoint propagated by the rulers of Bohemia at that time, according to which the Hussites were nothing but a band

of ruffians and their leader Zizka, a ruthless criminal. In upholding the view that mass movements play a decisive role in history, Jirasek came out against the reactionary theory of attributing the whole process of historical development solely to the activity of outstanding personalities.

Jirasek's interest in the period of the Czech Renaissance brought forth two major works: a five-volume novel *F. L. Vek* (1891-1906) and a four-volume novel *In Our Land* (1896-1904). The writer saw the main source of that national renaissance in the people's struggle against serfdom and in the development of capitalism in Bohemia. At the same time, as opposed to the reactionary historians' view who considered the development of Czech culture to be wholly and directly dependent on foreign influences, he pointed out the influence of the ideas born of the French Revolution of 1789 and the ties that existed between the Czech national revival and the development of Russian culture. Rejecting the then common opinion, he stressed the point that by the end of the 18th century Czech national culture had not been wiped out but had only suffered a temporary decline. Jirasek did extensive and painstaking research on that period of Czech history, which had been studied so little before.

A certain 18th-century merchant and poet of peasant stock named Hek, who actually lived in the town of Dobruska, served as a prototype for the title character of *F. L. Vek*. The novel's hero is a progressive man of his time who has read Rousseau and Voltaire and takes an active part in the social and political life of his country. The life-story of F. L. Vek, a typical Czech patriot, is representative of the life and struggle of a host of other people whose names are lost to posterity.

The composition of the novel stresses the interconnection of the various historic events. In the third volume, for instance, the chapters describing the French revolutionaries are interspersed with those telling of Suvorov and of the arrival of the Russian army in Prague.

Jirasek's artistic views, the ideas propounded in his novels and their political purposefulness caused marked resentment in official circles. The contemporary critics dubbed his works as tendentious and inartistic. They attributed his popularity among the masses to the fact that his works "catered to the unrefined tastes of the common people."

Jirasek died on March 12, 1930. His funeral turned into an impressive demonstration of the people's love for their writer. Jirasek's name is a symbol of patriotism in Czechoslovakia. His universally-known novels and the collection of *Czech People's Legends and Tales*, so beloved by the Czech youth, have helped to foster in several generations of his readers a deep love for their country and its heroic past, and awaken in them an ardent desire to bring the struggle for its social and national freedom to its victorious end.

In our days a 32-volume edition of Jirasek's complete works is being published in Czechoslovakia, a Jirasek museum has been opened in Hvezda, and his plays are running in many of the country's theatres.

In all his best works Jirasek, thinker and artist, has successfully embodied the most important principle of realistic art—the portrayal of the people as the creator of history. This explains the undying significance of his works and the ever-fresh interest they evoke in their readers.

PETER VERES

THE LIFE and writings of Peter Veres are inseparable from the life and struggles of the Hungarian people. As the son and grandson of farm labourers (Veres was born in 1897) hard work was his lot from early childhood. He started out as a stable-boy and then worked as a seasonal hand on the fields of kulaks and landlords; later he became a navvy and then a railway worker. Young as he was—not yet fifteen years old—when the peasant movement spread to his native village, he took part in it. To his experiences of poverty, the First World War—he fought on the Italian front—added experience of the soldier's bitter lot. From the trenches Private Veres came home to become one of the leading members of the land distribution committee in his native village during the Hungarian proletarian revolution of 1919.

Life naturally brought farm labourer Veres into the ranks of the opponents of the Horthy regime, and he joined the Socialist movement. His first articles and stories appeared in the early 'thirties. The true picture he presented of the intolerable conditions of the poor peasantry at once set the censors, the police and the courts up in arms against him. But Veres was not to be turned from his chosen course. A few years later he was already one of the foremost of Hungary's progressive writers, a member of the "March Front," an organization of progressive intellectuals. Towards the end of the Second World War, Veres together with other progressive writers and public leaders founded the National Peasant Party to represent the interests of the working peasantry and co-operate with the Communists in their underground struggle against the Nazis and their quisling supporters.

This fruitful co-operation continued after the country's liberation as well. The first important steps taken by People's Democratic Hungary—the agrarian reform and the nationalization of industry and the banks—found the writer taking active part and discharging his duties as head of the Land Distribution Council with youthful energy. No less energetically did he work to unite the country's literary forces. He frequently spoke and wrote on theoretical problems, advocating realism as the principal method of art. His public and literary activities won broad recognition. At a writers' conference held in 1954 Veres was elected chairman of the Union of Hungarian Writers.

The path Veres followed did not always run smooth. Progressive thought was savagely suppressed under Horthy, and it was not simple for the writer to win through to revolutionary truth and find his place in the social struggle. At one time Veres shared the mistakes of that section of the progressive Hungarian intelligentsia which over-estimated the social and political potentialities of the oppressed peasantry in the fight against the bourgeois landlord system, but those mistakes did not have a lasting influence upon his ideological development.

Veres proudly calls himself a "follower of Petöfi" who preferred to "howl with the hungry wolves rather than bark with the sated curs." The aims and the moral and aesthetic principles of Mihály Tancsics, an outstanding Hungarian publicist and public figure who championed the interests of the rural and urban poor, appealed to his heart and he was inspired by the civic fervour of Endre Ady, one of Hungary's greatest revolutionary poets who wrote at the beginning of the present century. Another important influence in Veres' ideological development was Maxim Gorky. Recalling his youth, Veres has himself recently told us how much the great Russian writer's work taught him. And in one of his earlier articles he remarked that he read every new book by Gorky "with breathless interest."

Veres' love for his people and his knowledge of the life of the peasants determined him to write the truth about the countryside, with the result that in many respects the stories he wrote before Hungary's liberation continued the finest civic and realistic traditions of Hungarian literature of the past. Both *Turfy Row* (1940) and *A Bad Year* (1942), his two volumes of short stories, pronounced a daring and stern indictment of the ruling classes which had brought famine and ruin upon the Hungarian countryside. In both books the accent is on the poetry of labour and on the bitter heart-break of hopes deceived, on the injustice of the system which exploited the working peasant and robbed him of the fruits of his daily and truly heroic struggle with nature and against the kulaks and profiteers.

Besides depicting realistically the dire poverty of day labourers, seasonal workers and farm hands on the one hand, and the world of the "fat" village rich, of the cold-bloodedly brutal landlords on the other, Veres sought to indicate the solution of the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors. That conflict, he showed, could be settled only by struggle, not by compromise. The moral forces necessary for the purpose were already maturing in the heart of the little swineherd he portrayed in his story *Sani*, although as yet the boy still bore his master's whippings and insults in silence. And Jani Kis, the young farm hand in the story *Farm Labourers*, already has so strong a sense of his own dignity that he does not allow the landlord's steward to insult him.

True, in these stories the protest of the oppressed has not yet acquired a truly revolutionary character. Veres' heroes are for the most part honest and self-sacrificing, but socially they are still passive (*A Bad Year*). They shun everything that has no direct concern with their own homes; a wall of petty cares shuts them off from the larger issues of life (*From the Diary of an Agricultural Worker*).

If these early stories have any failing, it is that the purely descriptive element is too much developed. Veres is at times himself so occupied with his pictures of farm work and of the everyday life of the peasants that he quite overlooks the broader social implications, the national horizons involved. This somewhat mars the clarity of the message his stories carry, although it does not detract from their artless fidelity to the truth, to which the author's lucid and simple style, colourful imagery and apt choice of words are so well suited. In both form and content Veres' books presented a challenge to the official cosmopolitan and decadent literature which had nothing but contempt for the people and their culture. With Pal Szabo, Jozsef Darvas, Gyula Ilyes and other progressive writers, Veres defended the democratic traditions of Hungarian literature.

The first book Veres published after his country's liberation was a volume of short stories entitled *The Test* (1949). By that time great changes had already taken place in Hungary. The bourgeois landlord system had collapsed; the agrarian reform had given the poor peasants the land they had so long yearned for; the first agricultural producers' co-operatives had already appeared. The countryside was in a ferment: a new life was in the making. Describing these changes, the author does not simplify the real difficulties they were attended with. He draws sharp political portraits of his characters, of the landlords Csatory and Bacso-Kelemen, and of the kulak Szabo, showing that these reactionaries were doomed by history. They resist the course of history furiously; they cling tight to their former privileges, weave intrigues, seek the support of the backward peasants, trusting to the power of private-property instincts to carry them through. But their efforts are in vain. Deep in the minds of the peasants new ways of thinking are already gaining ground. Veres' book is quite literally a chronicle of the spiritual and political growth of the plain people of the village, resulting from the far-reaching social and economic changes taking place in the country.

Highly illustrative is the story of Danko, the farm hand who at long last has come to taste the joy of working his own land, but gradually also grows aware of the limitations of individual farming. With restrained and deliberate strokes Veres shows how the example of the peasants who have organized the first collective farm in his region fills Danko with the growing desire to join them and work with them to conquer the disasters with which the elements threaten the farmer. In this story the description of farm work is psychologically justified, for here the farmer's cares do not fence him off from the rest of the world as was the case in Veres' earlier stories; now they help him to find the correct solution to a vitally important problem.

The same solution is found by Gabor Barna, another farm hand. His political growth is greatly aided by his friendship with the Communist, Gabor Kis. The latter is as a responsive tutor to the peasants. By the example of his selfless devotion to the common weal, by the wisdom of his counsels he teaches them firmness of purpose and an honest Socialist attitude toward their duties. Gabor Barna and Gabor Kis are new types in Veres' work. They are truly positive heroes—characters copied straight from life.

In his preface to *The Test*, Veres, discussing the new ideological and aesthetic tasks facing Hungarian literature, emphasized the necessity of understanding life in its revolutionary development, of showing "the today which grows out of yesterday and develops into tomorrow," of depicting "not only what is or has been . . . but also what should be." The book itself offers proof that in large measure he has met the demand he makes on Hungarian literature as a whole and on himself above all. The life of the Hungarian countryside in the first years of liberation has in his stories found full and faithful depiction.

Veres has always been quick to react to current events. Some years ago, however, he conceived the idea of returning to the past of the Hungarian people that, viewing it from the heights of today's achievements, he might obtain a broader and more correct understanding of the path they had travelled. In pursuance of that idea he planned his trilogy *Three Generations* (so far two volumes have appeared: *Slavery* in 1950 and *The*

Love of Poor Folk in 1952), telling of life under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and then under the Horthy dictatorship. Similar to these in its general trend is the short novel *Railwaymen* (1951).

In all of these books—in the first two volumes of his trilogy and in the shorter novel—Veres describes the work of agricultural and railway workers, exhausting, stupefying work that makes a man old before his time. But as a writer who has an understanding of historical development, he shows that under all circumstances work remains a strong force that cements the oppressed and moulds and steels their characters. All three novels breathe of faith in the spiritual beauty and creative power of the people. Their positive characters inspire confidence in the enduring worth of the material and moral values produced by the people.

In both *Railwaymen* and the trilogy Veres deals with a larger number of subjects than usual. For the first time he portrays the life and the labour of workers. Both works contain vivid scenes of the struggle of farm labourers and railwaymen for their rights. This increases the ideological significance of the books, adds depth and fullness to the experiences of the characters and heightens the dramatic tension of the action. A good example is the strike of the mowers in 1906 led by Gabor Kis (*Slavery*), especially the crucial moment when the steward arrives in the fields with the gendarmes and they attempt to split the strikers and then arrest the “ring-leaders.” This scene holds the reader’s attention above all because the author portrays the psychological state of the participants: the staunchness of the most advanced workers, the vacillation and confusion of the backward ones, the cold-blooded insidiousness of the gendarmes, the growing fury of the steward; the play of emotions, the weariness of waiting, the impossibility of retreat which frightens some and lends courage to others.

In *The Test* Veres already made an attempt to portray the growing moral and political maturity of the plain man. In the published parts of his trilogy he goes further and shows the interaction of circumstances and character-formation, the unity of the historical development of the people and the development of the individual. This unity and interaction find convincing expression in the farm hand Jani Balogh, one of the principal characters of the trilogy. The best traits of his character—modesty, consideration for other people, staunchness in labour and in struggle—are moulded in the crucible of the experiences of the people.

No less striking in both the trilogy and *Railwaymen* are the lifelike, full-coloured portraits Veres draws of members of the ruling classes who individually and together personify the rottenness of the anti-popular regime set up in Hungary after the fall of Soviet power in 1919. The railway office Veres describes is staffed by inveterate reactionaries and ignorant careerists, by wholly incompetent young men of “good family” whose only qualification for their lucrative posts is the recommendation of their influential relatives. All of them are out to line their own pockets, and they shamelessly persecute and deceive the workers.

The same line of realistic portrayal of the enemy, which yet has about it a sharp flavour of satire, is continued in *Apple Orchard* (1953), a short novel showing up the survivals of bureaucracy in present-day Hungary. The butts of the author’s criticism in this book are the charlatans and careerists who worm their way into high government positions and set the interests of the people at naught. The reader here meets bureaucrats

of every conceivable description and sees them abuse the power given them by their official positions, squander time and energy in squabbles, build up a meaningless routine of administration, indulge in criminal extravagance. Kemeny, who stands at the head of all the fruit-growing in the country, is a windbag, a rapacious careerist who covers up his dirty dealings by demagogical speeches about the welfare of the people. Horn, his assistant, would like nothing better than to get his chief removed and take his place. Vilma Marton has no compunctions about slandering honest people.

Opposed to this scum are honest progressive people like Lajos Barta, who tells the story. For all that Barta is still wanting in political experience, that all too often he is irresolute, in the end he consolidates the healthy forces around himself and unmasks the saboteurs and scoundrels who have wormed their way into leadership. Others of the same new breed of men are Sandor Hodi, a true leader of the people who makes the effort to grasp the "secrets" of the profession and takes a deep interest in the organization of labour and in the lives of the workers, and Uncle Bazso, an honest workingman, supremely devoted to his trade. It is they who in *Apple Orchard* give expression to the true public opinion; it is their views, their opinions, their conduct at work and at home that give the book its positive value and social significance.

No less topical is Veres' latest book, *A Bad Wife* (1954), touching upon problems of Socialist morality. The respect working people have for the dignity of womanhood, the poetry of their feelings for women were brought out by Veres in quite a few of his earlier works. In *A Bad Wife* the moral standards of the new man clash with the pretentious parasitical morality of people indifferent to all cultural values. The backward ideas about life and marriage held by Ibolyka, the wife of Jozsi Majoros, a young Stakhanovite, seem especially ugly in comparison with the interests that absorb her husband. Honest and straightforward Jozsi Majoros suffers deeply from the petty squabbles in which he has been involved by his marriage to a frivolous girl whose mind is poisoned by petty bourgeois prejudices. The discord between husband and wife and the spiritual crisis Jozsi Majoros goes through are depicted with great artistry. There is deep logic in the gradual disillusionment of the hero. And by allowing the reader to follow its course step by step as it were, rather than merely describing it impersonally, the author heightens the dramatic tension of the story.

The past ten years have been years of growth for Peter Veres; they have brought him broader political horizons and greater mastery of the literary craft. His participation in the building of Socialism, in public life, in the education of the working people in the spirit of patriotism, have enriched his inner world and stimulated his creative powers. His efforts to illumine the pressing problems of life in modern Hungary, his tackling of epic forms, and of the historical and satirical genres, his fruitful journalistic activities, all bear witness to the creative ability and the spiritual youth of this major Hungarian novelist. Peter Veres is continuing and developing the finest realistic traditions of classical literature, and with other gifted writers of the Hungarian People's Democracy is successfully creating a new literature in his native land—the literature of Socialist realism.



Mikhail Botvinnik

By SALO FLOHR

I MADE the acquaintance of the present world chess champion Mikhail Botvinnik in two ways. First I met him through his games published in chess journals in 1933, then, in the same year, I met him in person.

The games of the young Soviet master made so deep an impression on me that I lost no time in trying to arrange a friendly match with him. Apart from my desire, as champion of Czechoslovakia, to meet Botvinnik at the chess-board, I had for long wanted to visit the Soviet Union, about which I had heard so many wonderful and unusual things.

My suggestion was accepted by the Soviet chess organization, and soon I found myself walking for the first time down the broad streets of Moscow, gazing with the greatest curiosity at everything around me.

Upon first acquaintance Botvinnik struck me as being a very serious person and, although he was only twenty-two, thoroughly self-confident. Of medium height, well-built, unhurried in his movements, with a high, clear forehead, calm, penetrating gaze and charming smile, he at once commanded my respect.

I was literally overwhelmed by the conditions in which the match was played. Chess players in the West considered themselves lucky if even for big international tournaments they had more or less tolerable accommodation and a hundred or so spectators to watch the match. But in Moscow, when I found myself on the stage of the Trade Union House with the auditorium packed to overflowing, I realized that the ancient game of chess had found in the Soviet Union its second motherland.

In the first half of the match things went well with me and, to be quite frank, I was confident of victory. But in the second half Botvinnik's play became stronger and stronger with the result that the match ended in a draw, each of us winning two games with eight drawn.

In that match, so memorable for me, I learned a characteristic feature of Botvinnik's play—his determination, and his ability to mobilize all his strength at the crucial moment. That quality of Botvinnik's has brought him more than one brilliant victory.

It is easy and yet difficult to write about Botvinnik. The facts of his biography as a chess-player are fairly well known, and there is very little difficulty about reminding the reader of them. A far more exacting task is to analyse Botvinnik's character and follow the development of all those qualities that have brought Botvinnik to the very peak of his art. Behind the outwardly simple moves in any of Botvinnik's games lie years of stubborn and purposeful work, years spent in training mind and will.



M. Botvinnik (friendly cartoon
by N. Lisogorsky)

Mikhail Botvinnik was born in St. Petersburg on August 17, 1911. Early becoming acquainted with chess for which he showed great talent, he had by the age of sixteen already won the title of Master. At twenty he was champion of the Soviet Union. Among Botvinnik's most outstanding successes, one should mention the international tournament in Moscow in 1935, the Nottingham international tournament in 1936, and eight successive first prizes won at Soviet and international competitions in 1941-48. That run of victories began with the tournament match for the title of absolute champion of the U.S.S.R. and ended with the tournament match for the world championship (Moscow—The Hague).

In the Nottingham tournament Botvinnik shared first place with Capablanca, beating all the strongest grandmasters of the day—Euwe, then world champion, Alekhine, Lasker, Reshevsky, Fine, and others. For that success, welcomed joyfully by the whole Soviet land, the Soviet Government awarded Botvinnik the Badge of Honour.

It was in Nottingham that Botvinnik first met Alexandr Alekhine. The game between them was short but fiercely contested. Alekhine, who had carefully prepared for a game which was as important to him as it was to his opponent, served Botvinnik an unpleasant surprise, developing an opening that Botvinnik frequently played in an entirely new way.

At the critical moment, when he fell for the trap Alekhine had prepared, Botvinnik's magnificent fighting qualities came to the fore. Having carefully sorted out the exceptionally complex situation, the Soviet champion discovered in the labyrinth of complicated combinations (in which Alekhine was particularly strong) the only right path. Then he proceeded to eliminate the danger that threatened him and forced one of the most interesting of all games to a draw.

This is what Alekhine wrote about Botvinnik after Nottingham: "The wonderful success of the most outstanding of the young chess-players—Botvinnik, Champion of the Soviet Union—did not come as a surprise. He had already shown his merit in the two Moscow tournaments of 1935 and 1936. His achievement at Nottingham proves that he is the most likely candidate for the title of world champion. Personally, I consider that he has every chance of becoming champion of the world in the very near future. Besides his immense talent, he possesses all the qualities that are of decisive importance for success—courage, endurance, a sound instinct for assessing the situation, and finally, youth. In comparison with the strong and correct play of the Soviet champion, the other young grandmasters are far less impressive. Fine and Reshevsky are undoubtedly brilliant technicians, particularly if one takes account of their age. Yet I have a

feeling (I may be called old-fashioned for it) that in their play there is rather too much 'technique' and not enough 'artistry.'"

Two years later, at the Amsterdam tournament, at which the world's strongest players were once again assembled, Botvinnik succeeded in creating two genuine *chefs-d'oeuvre* of chess. I speak of his splendid victories over Alekhine and Capablanca. In these two games Botvinnik demonstrated the full depth of his immense talent.

In his game against Alekhine, the Soviet grandmaster, having gained a slight advantage in the opening, developed the game with great technical brilliance, always finding the best move and giving his formidable opponent no respite. Botvinnik himself wrote: "One of those games where there are no beautiful moves; all the moves appear to be very simple, yet not one of them can be omitted, for they are all closely bound up with one another."

Botvinnik's game with Capablanca was completely different. The Soviet grandmaster succeeded in carrying through an exceptionally profound and effective combination.

If the game between Botvinnik and Alekhine can be compared to an exact engineering plan drawn by a man who is master of his trade, his game with Capablanca is a picture of dazzling colour painted by an inspired artist.

1941, the year of Hitler Germany's treacherous attack on the Soviet Union, the first year of the Soviet people's heroic struggle which saved their Motherland and the whole world from the horrors of fascism.

Leaving chess for a while, Botvinnik gave all his energy to his country as an engineer. In the summer of 1943 one could have met him at several power stations in the Urals, where he was testing high-voltage insulation.

But Botvinnik is not only a practical engineer. As a research scientist he has carried out a number of valuable experiments on synchronous electrical machines. Botvinnik's improvements have been very useful technically and economically.

A few years ago Botvinnik defended a thesis for the degree of Master of Technical Sciences, and quite recently he became a Doctor of Technical Sciences. The Soviet Government has awarded Botvinnik a second order—this time for his engineering achievements. Botvinnik is a harmonious combination of the scientist and the chess-player.

The holding of a match between Alekhine and Botvinnik for the world championship was practically arranged, when Alekhine died suddenly in March 1946.

For the first time in sixty years the chess world was left without a champion. The only logical way out of this situation was to organize a tournament match of the strongest contemporary players and award the victor the title.

Such a tournament was held in 1948 at The Hague and in Moscow. As is known, the first place and the title of world champion was won by Mikhail Botvinnik by a large margin. The second place fell to the Soviet Grandmaster Vasili Smyslov, the third and fourth places were shared by Soviet Grandmaster Keres and Grandmaster Reshevsky. The fifth place was won by the Dutch Grandmaster Euwe. In May 1948, Mikhail Botvinnik

was formally decorated with the laurel wreath of world champion. It was a well-deserved reward for a distinguished chess-player.

Three years passed, and Botvinnik, in accordance with the ruling of the World Chess Federation, had to defend his title against the victor of a series of qualifying competitions—the Soviet Grandmaster David Bronstein.

Bronstein, who mastered the art of chess at the Young Pioneer's Palace in Kiev, had, like Botvinnik, gained the title of Master at the age of sixteen. His tremendous gift for combinational play, his great will to win, and his highly original approach to chess theory, of which he is a profound scholar, have made Bronstein one of the strongest players in the world.

The Botvinnik-Bronstein match was for the best of twenty-four games. If the result was a draw, the world champion retained his title.

It was an intensely exciting match. Suffice it to say, that not once throughout the match did either player gain an advantage of more than one point over his opponent. Botvinnik was in a particularly dangerous position after the twenty-second game. Bronstein had $11\frac{1}{2}$ points against Botvinnik's $10\frac{1}{2}$, and he had only to win one of the last two games to become world champion. Botvinnik, on the other hand, had to gain one and a half points in order to retain his title. Moreover, it should be pointed out that in the twenty-first and twenty-second games Bronstein had won two splendid victories, and it would have been natural for his opponent to feel somewhat demoralized. But at this most testing moment in the struggle, that inimitable quality of Botvinnik's showed itself in its full glory—the imminent danger of defeat gave him fresh strength. Mustering all his will-power, he made brilliant use of the slight faults committed by Bronstein, and playing the twenty-third game—in effect the deciding game of the whole match—with iron consistency, gained a well-deserved victory. The last game was a draw and Botvinnik retained his title.

But the onslaught of the young generation of Soviet grandmasters did not weaken. In the 1953 championship of the U.S.S.R. Botvinnik shared first and second place with the young pianist and Grandmaster Mark Taimanov, a post-graduate at the Leningrad Conservatoire, and then defeated him in a short match of six games for the title of Champion of the U.S.S.R. In 1954, in the next match for the world championship, Botvinnik, not without difficulty, it is true, repulsed Smyslov, whose one great advantage over Botvinnik is that he is ten years younger than the world champion.

At the age of seventeen, while still at school, Smyslov became champion of his home city, Moscow, and received the title of Master. Two years later he became a grandmaster, the youngest grandmaster in the world.

Smyslov's success in the 1948 tournament for the title of world champion, and his victory at the international tournament in Switzerland in 1953, when he finished two points ahead of his closest rivals, Bronstein, Keres, and Reshevsky, gave Smyslov the right to meet the champion of the world Botvinnik.

This duel between the two best chess-players of modern times was even more intense than the Botvinnik-Bronstein match.

In the early stages the play went against Smyslov. After six games—the first quarter of the competition—the score was $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in favour of the champion, and many people expected a walk-over. But they reckoned without Smyslov's fighting qualities and his profound knowledge of theory.

In the seventh game he defeated Botvinnik, then there was a draw, then Smyslov defeated Botvinnik three times in succession, an unprecedented event in Botvinnik's career as a chess-player. Those who had foretold an easy victory for Botvinnik, now became inclined to think that the laurel wreath would go to his young rival. But in the next five games Botvinnik gained four points, and the match ended in a draw.

In September last year the XI Chess Olympiad was held in Amsterdam. The captain of the Soviet team was Mikhail Botvinnik. Playing on the first board, the world champion was, as always, a formidable threat to his opponents. Although he faced the strongest foreign players, he did not suffer a single defeat. For the best result on the first board he was awarded a special prize.

Brilliant success also fell to the whole Soviet team, which again won the Olympic cup. Botvinnik, as captain of the winning team, was awarded the medal of the Prince of the Netherlands.

Botvinnik's methods of preparing himself for his matches are rather interesting. Besides keeping to a training regime as strict as that of a champion in any branch of sport, Botvinnik studies his future opponents' methods of play and tries to penetrate as deeply as possible into their psychology. Before meeting them at the chess-board, he prepares opening plans and tactical manoeuvres that will not fit in with their style of play. Apart from this, Botvinnik goes into special training to adapt himself to the conditions of the competition. As a non-smoker, Botvinnik at one time suffered very much during tournaments from being unused to tobacco smoke. To overcome this weakness, he introduced a new feature into his system of training and asked a friend of his who was a heavy smoker to "smoke at" him for five hours running. Botvinnik soon became accustomed to tobacco, although he is still a non-smoker.

Mikhail Botvinnik is a genuine innovator in the art of chess. That is true not only of his brilliant practical achievements, but also of his theoretical works.

His books *The Flohr-Botvinnik Match*, *The Alekhine-Euwe Return-Match*, *The 1941 Tournament Match for the Title of Absolute Chess Champion of the U.S.S.R.*, *The Soviet School of Chess*, *Selected Games* are to be found on the shelves of every Soviet chess-player.

Botvinnik has made a valuable contribution to modern opening theory and enriched it with many valuable ideas. "Botvinnik's system" of playing the Queen's gambit, for example, has won a sure place in the practice of many grandmasters and has many victories to its credit. It is quite useless to attempt to catch Botvinnik out with theoretical "novelties." In his careful preparation for competition games he studies the subtleties of every opening, lending them new force and depth. Let us take two examples.

In the Second Moscow International Tournament in 1935, Grandmaster R. Spielmann (Germany) tried out against Botvinnik one of his own "concoctions," hoping to take the Soviet champion by surprise. But it turned out the other way round. Spielmann's "concoctions," it appeared, had already been analysed and rejected by Botvinnik long beforehand. The result was that Spielmann suffered lightning defeat. He was forced to surrender on the twelfth move. A rare event in international chess!

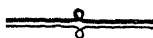
In the XII U.S.S.R. Championship in 1940, Botvinnik lost a game to the Lithuanian master V. Mikenas. After a detailed analysis of the play, Botvinnik discovered his mistake and the correct answer. Soon afterwards came the tournament match for the title of absolute champion of the U.S.S.R. On meeting Botvinnik, the Estonian Grandmaster P. Keres, guided by the result of the Mikenas-Botvinnik game, unwisely decided to use Mikenas's tactics. Had he known Botvinnik better at that time, he would never have committed such an error, an error of psychological judgement rather than chess technique. Botvinnik used the answer which he had discovered in good time and quickly won an important game.

To learn from his own mistakes as well as those of his opponents is one of the "secrets" of Botvinnik's success.

Botvinnik has in his possession three gold medals and three laurel wreathes for victories in world championship matches. They are the tangible symbols of his fine achievements in the art of chess.

The world champion has a true friend and helper in his wife Gayaneh Botvinnik, a ballerina at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. More than once after a fresh victory Botvinnik has addressed warm words of gratitude to his modest but invaluable helpmate.

Botvinnik is now forty-three. He is in the prime of his strength. Thinker, scientist and fighter, Botvinnik's last intention is to rest on his laurels. To my mind, it will be some time before he parts with his title of world champion.



EVENTS AND OPINIONS

Writers' Forum * Polish State Theatre in the U. S. S. R. * Konenkov Exhibition

The Soviet press has always been attentive to the development of Soviet literature and to problems of craftsmanship of interest to writers. Recently, prominent Soviet authors have been discussing their creative problems in the columns of *Pravda*, which has started a Writers' Forum for this purpose. One of the contributors to this column was Konstantin Simonov with some comments on play-writing.

"All too often," Simonov wrote, "we used to draw our heroes in a void. We spread soft carpets for them to tread on; with our own hands we removed the obstacles and smoothed out the bumps in their road. At times we took bad or dangerous people by the hand and led them away from our hero's path. As a result he never had a chance to cope with the real difficulties of the struggle against bad and backward elements. In principle we recognized the existence of those elements, but we did not give them flesh and blood. . . ."

Criticizing writers who engaged in fruitless discussion of the quantitative relation between the negative and positive elements in a play, Simonov continued:

"It is not a matter of the number of characters of one type or the other, but of the author's purpose in writing his play. Does he really condemn his negative characters or only pretend to despise them while actually feeling quite tolerant towards or even curious about them? Does he really love his positive heroes with all his heart or does he feel quite indifferent to them and bring them on to the stage only for the sake of striking an artificial balance?"

"It is wrong and harmful to divorce the depiction of the positive from the depiction of the negative in our literature. Unless we understand the one correctly, we cannot understand the other."

The writer Fyodor Gladkov says in his article "The Most Precious Quality":

"That there is no keener torment than the torment 'of the word' is a stern truth.

But that the inspired writer draws his portraits in his own manner, in a style inherent to himself alone, is no less true. The language of such a writer is expressive of himself, of his individuality. Highly instructive to each of us is the example of Anton Chekhov. His every word and every phrase is simple, tangible, suggestive. He chose his words so that each of them is immensely rich in meaning and in feeling, each remarkably musical. Only a master of the word could write such wonderful things as *The Duel*, *In the Ravine*, *Three Years and The Betrothed* so tersely and freely, so compactly and broadly. Each character is typical, each creates the illusion of life, so that you see them not as figures in a book but as corporeally tangible beings. And always you are aware of Chekhov himself with his knowing, sad smile and his intelligent eyes. . . .

"A writer's honest, inspired and purposeful idea, his need to express himself demand honest, lucid, precise words. Slack use of words, juggling and twisting them is an intolerable form of buffoonery; the writer who goes in for that sort of thing knows nothing of the torments of creation, his freakish inventions, all his 'methods' and 'finds' are merely a verbal sleight-of-hand. I may be blamed for pointing out self-evident truths. But when those truths are forgotten—and some young writers have only a vague notion of them—it becomes necessary to recall them to mind."

An appeal to writers to assist each other more effectively is voiced by the Byelorussian writer Yakub Kolas in his article "On Writing."

"Why does a poet who has encompassed a broad range of social phenomena in his work, who has been borne aloft by a faultlessly pure and high wave of feeling, suddenly fall silent or begin to slip?"

"It is just there that a helping hand is wanted from all of us—from older and younger colleagues, from impartial critics, from our kind friends, the readers.

Friendly advice, simple human interest, the straight truth can remedy matters decisively. Only not by means of irritating exhortations and certainly not by any kind of restraint on creative initiative. All I have in mind is giving some sort of impetus towards further inner enrichment, towards deeper thought and feeling, towards perfection of skill. That, in my opinion, is the form relations between writers and leaders of literary organizations should take. And the latter must be chosen from among the most talented and experienced masters."

In his article "Living Heroes in Our Literature," Boris Polevoy raises some theoretical problems concerning stories about real heroes. He writes:

"Books about specific, real people have the strength of truth. They do not tolerate any embellishment or retouching of reality, any of the pink syrup with which our writers unfortunately sometimes still sweeten their work. Their hero is a real living man and he must have both feet on the ground, not walk about on stilts. And he must by all means give expression to the characteristic traits of his time, he must be a typical character pictured in typical circumstances. Besides the author's literary skill, it is in large measure this latter quality that determines the power and vitality of this kind of book. When the author fails to understand this, his book falls flat and neither professional skill nor even true talent can save it.

"The task of the writer who portrays a living contemporary is much greater than merely presenting a real life in fictional form. He will be successful only when, in telling the story of his living hero, he draws broad pictures of life and shows him to be a typical representative of his generation, stamped with the traits of the epoch."

Boris Romashov, the playwright, discusses the training of young playwrights, urging them to study the classics unceasingly and to assimilate the traditions of Soviet dramaturgy. He also appeals to the more experienced writers to help their younger colleagues and pay careful attention to budding talent. "To whom," he asks, "can the beginner turn if not to an older master? Who but the author who has a wide experience of life and art can really share that experience with a young novice? Personal contact is a splendid means of sharing experience. . . .

"What youth needs is responsive attention, not condescension. Youth has to be able to dare, to strive ever forward, to master skill. And of those young authors who have already proved their

worth, we must make serious demands, for they are the future masters who are to replace the older generation of playwrights.

"Gorky bequeathed to our literature the propagation of an active attitude towards reality," Romashov continues. "Young dramatists must bring to the stage in plays of varied genres the throbbing pulsation of modern life, the remarkable people and stirring ideas of our times. More boldness in choice of themes, in composition, in the quest for new characters! One would like to see poetry in our plays, true poetry, the breath of life, fresh and vital ideas."

A vivid expression of the inviolable friendship between the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and Poland, a friendship constantly growing stronger and manifested in a multifarious way was the Soviet tour of the Polish State Theatre.

The Soviet press followed the tour closely and published many articles, reviews and comments on it. The *Iskusstvo* Publishing House put out a book specially for the occasion, entitled *Essays on the Polish State Theatre, Its Repertoire and Brief Notes on Its Plays*.

The first play the theatre presented in Moscow was a dramatization of B. Prus' novel *The Puppet*, and a detailed review of it by Y. Zavadsky, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., appeared in *Pravda*.

"In the course of the play," Zavadsky wrote, "the theatre shows a large variety of types and a series of realistic scenes faithfully picturing the social atmosphere of the time. Each of the character portrayals, even of the minor personages, is done with a care that speaks well for the theatre's high standards. The play is staged with the utmost accuracy and artistic discretion. . . ."

A great success was scored by the theatre's second play, the tragedy *Julius and Ethel* (director A. Bardini) by Leon Kruczkowski, winner of an International Stalin Peace Prize. Of this production, the dramatic critic P. Markov wrote in *Pravda*:

"Seldom is one so deeply moved in the theatre as at the performance of Leon Kruczkowski's *Julius and Ethel* by the company of the State Polish Theatre. From the moment the curtain goes up on the grey-green walls of a prison cell to Julius' and Ethel's final powerful appeal to the audience, one's attention does not slacken for an instant. From first to last the audience watches this

austere, clever, subtle play with bated breath. So clear-cut is its structure, so distinct the producer's idea and so sincerely earnest the acting that even the unfamiliar language cannot break the strong contact established between audience and stage."

Before reviewing the performance, the critic gives a brief account of the play and how it came to be written:

"Kruczkowski based his play on the Rosenberg case in America which shocked the whole world. He confides that he 'had to write this play' and his portraits of the Rosenbergs, of that noble couple whose spirit simply could not be broken, are drawn with the utmost fidelity. They refused to buy their life at the price of treachery and hypocrisy, at the price of denying their personal dignity, the struggle for democracy and our moral ideals, and their death cast an ineffaceable blot upon the American way of life."

The Polish theatre also presented to Soviet audiences its production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. The newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura* printed a review of this production by V. Orlov, People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R., who himself performs the role of Voinitsky (Uncle Vanya) on the boards of the Moscow Art Theatre.

"The Polish actors," Orlov wrote, "approach our beloved Chekhov seriously, with tender feeling. . . . They make their superb skill serve the main aim of bringing out the idea of the play, an idea which they consider of value to us all today. And that gives fresh spontaneity to their performance."

"... Her true feeling for the dramatic quality of Chekhov's plays is to the credit of Maria Wiercinska as a producer. Far from sharing the erroneous but prevalent view of Chekhov's dramas as static pictures of a static, monotonous life, she perceives the sharp conflicts around which they are built."

There are some points, however, on which Orlov differs with his Polish colleagues. He writes, for instance:

"Mieczysław Milecki plays Uncle Vanya very well. He has many fine qualities: simplicity, harmony, temperament, good taste. And he draws a sharp portrait of Voinitsky as a broken, harassed man who has spent his life in vain and does not believe in the possibility of renascence. The hopeless love in his eyes when he looks at beautiful Yelena Andreyevna wrings one's heart with pity. But it is not only in the final scene that he realizes the hopelessness of his love and the fruitlessness of his life; Milecki's Voinitsky is aware of his unen-

vable state from the very first. Personally, I interpret this part differently when I play it. I seek to show that it is only gradually, in the course of the play, that Voinitsky realizes that his life has been misspent. Though dying, his faith in happiness, in the possibility of beginning life anew, is ready to flare up strong again, and I cherish it. To me his anguished cry 'I haven't lived' means 'I want to live.' I strive to show Voinitsky's gradual tragic awakening in direct scenic action. Nevertheless, I quite understand the validity of the interpretation offered by my talented Polish colleague. His hero has long since gone through what *mine* goes through only in the last act, and hence his bitter, leaden hopelessness."

Among the many reviews of J. Juran-dot's comedy *Such Times*, that of the Ukrainian actor Maryan Krushelnitsky, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., published in *Pravda* following its performance by the Polish Theatre in Kiev, might be cited as the most characteristic. The comedy itself Krushelnitsky praises as gay and full of life, and of the directing and acting he writes:

"The play has been splendidly staged by Marian Wyrzykowski, and Zenobiusz Strzelecki has provided fine settings for it. The grace of the producer's pattern charms the audience. Seeing *Such Times* gave us one more opportunity to enjoy this artistically harmonious ensemble and the thoughtful, talented acting of its members. The actors happily combine fidelity to life with skilful technique that is all the truer for its fine simplicity."

The recent exhibition of the work of S. T. Konenkov, one of the oldest Russian sculptors, enjoyed a tremendous success in Moscow. In connection with it, Academician Igor Grabar published an enthusiastic review in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* which was all the more interesting for being based on the author's reminiscences of his long-standing acquaintance with Konenkov.

"On the eve of this long-expected exhibition, timed for the sculptor's eightieth birthday and the sixtieth anniversary of his creative activity, I felt I wanted to see his latest work," writes Grabar. "I was familiar with everything he had done between the 1890's, i.e., from the time when we were both students at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, and the end of 1953, and I had no doubt when I went to call at his studio that I would

find there several wonderful pieces of work produced since then, in 1954.

"Imagine my surprise when instead of two or three, I saw there some fifty new sculptures, executed in the course of a single year. Nor were these the kind of things that appear today only to be forgotten tomorrow; no, they were works created for all eternity. They are so new, so fascinatingly unusual that you cannot tear yourself away from them."

Further, Grabar describes the most significant of Konenkov's latest works and his methods of giving material embodiment to his ideas.

"There is a large series of decorative sculptures for the new theatre in Petrozavodsk, the capital of the Karelo-Finnish Republic, all of them still in process of creation. . . .

"One of the groups, the most well-defined and nearest to completion, is intended for the pediment of the building and represents a ring of graceful collective-farm girls whirling round in a joyous dance. Their movements are smooth and rhythmic. In another intricate composition the same theme of merry recreation and absorption in art is treated in the form of a frieze which is to girdle the outside walls of the building.

"To cope with this gigantic task is beyond the physical strength of even so hardy an octogenarian as Konenkov, and so for the first time in his life he has had to organize a large team of talented and enthusiastic young sculptors to assist him. One can easily imagine the delight with which they responded to his appeal for help.

"Konenkov fashioned all the figures in clay with his own hands, leaving it to his young assistants to fill in the details of their bodies, movements and draperies under his daily supervision. Although the work has yet to be completed, this co-operation between one of the oldest and most experienced of Russian sculptors and a strong group of talented young artists has already brought good results.

"One of the most impressive of the sculptor's latest works is his self-portrait in marble. This bust is of a worth that calls to mind in some degree the self-portrait of Leonardo da Vinci and the *Moses* of Michelangelo; it is the rightful crown of his creative achievement to the present day."

In a long article about the exhibition published in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura*, D. Arkin, an art historian, analyses Konenkov's creative development. Touching on the early period of his work, he writes:

"The Great October Revolution marked a fundamentally new period in Konenkov's creative development as well. A new hero appeared in his work in the 'twenties. Working in the same medium, wood, he created a portrait of Stepan Razin. True, his series of wooden sculptures *Stepan Razin and His Men* depicts the popular hero, the leader of the old peasant freemen, and his assistants, in the deliberately simplified and largely conventional forms that were the sculptor's tribute to the 'left' tendencies that prevailed in art in those days.

"One other important element appeared in Konenkov's work in the early years of the Revolution. His leaning towards monumental forms, evident even in his early work, now found expression in new, genuinely heroic images. For the first time his statues emerged from the studio to take their place under the open sky. In those years the sculptor moulded and coloured a memorial board for the Kremlin Wall. And besides his Razin, he carved a wooden figure of a *Woman Textile Worker* and in 1923 two splendid caryatids for the pavilions of the All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition.

"All these works were Konenkov's answer to those who once saw only 'primitive wood carving' in his work. Incidentally, even in his early stages it was manifest that this 'wood carver' had at his command all the wealth of world plastic art, that he could give new and national interpretations of the plastic values of the ancient East, pre-classical and classical Greece, Hellenism and 18th- and 19th-century Russian classicism. This is to be seen in works of various years, in his delicate hellenistic *Youth*, in his ponderous *Samson* which is reminiscent of the laconic and sharp contours of Assyrian reliefs, in the bronze *Horus*, in *Cora* and *Eos*—heads of coloured marble done as memories of Homer's Greece and pervaded by a live, not bookish, feeling for antique beauty. And side by side with them there is the marble head of *Nike*, depicted not in the formidable splendour of triumph, but with a shy, sweet smile: the victory of the joy of life and feminine tenderness—the head of a Russian girl taking the place of an ancient Greek goddess. . . .

"That period was one of transition from woodland shade to the spacious brightness of a sunny morning. Representative of that transition are such fine sculptures as *A Little Girl*, *Girl with Garland*, *The Winged*. Konenkov shows how wood, knotty and rough in *Forest Bogey* and *Beggar Crew*, can become melodious!

and tender. In these figures, as also in his marble nudes (*Slumber, Awakening* and many of his torsos), he has given embodiment to an ideal of physical beauty profoundly different from the classical canons. And yet the traditions of Russian classicism, which gave rise to the charming female figures of Martos, Prokofiev and Shchedrin, are continued in these works which give new expression to the noble harmony of the human body, a harmony that has nothing in common with the saccharine sleekness of the favourites of the bourgeois salons or the cold indifference of the West-European academic school. And the folk features of Konenkov's art are no less evident in the bright figures of *A Little Girl* and *The Winged* than in the woodland figures of old Rus, which seem to have come straight from the midst of a virgin forest."

Arkin concludes his article with an analysis of Konenkov's latest work.

"The exhibition," he writes, "at last affords us the opportunity to see and

evaluate all Konenkov's work, but it is what he is doing today that makes the strongest impression. With his return to his native land after a long absence, his art flowered afresh.

"In his latest efforts Konenkov seems definitely to have got over his wavering between the grotesque and the harmonious, which gave a palpably dual quality to his earlier work. A new harmony—a realistic clarity of portraiture—prevails in his present work. His plastic style today is marked by laconic treatment of formal elements, sure command of the chisel and a keen eye. . . ."

Of Konenkov's bas-reliefs for the Institute of Geochemistry in Moscow, Arkin writes:

"In Konenkov's latest monumental works the principal theme of Soviet sculpture, the theme of the free man, finds new development. This theme, that has been nobly interpreted by a number of Soviet sculptors in works breathing of faith in man and his lofty destiny, now rings strong in Konenkov's art."



MISCELLANY

The Bakhrushin Theatrical Museum

Would you like to hear Chaliapin, or see the costume in which Yermolova made her debut, or examine the settings of the Art Theatre's early productions? Would you like to know what Shchepkin looked like in the role of Famusov, or read the letters of such famous men and women of the theatre as Sadovsky, Lensky, Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, Aldridge or Rossi? In brief, would you like to see the history of Russian theatre come alive before your eyes? Then all you need to do is call at the old Moscow mansion that was once the home of a connoisseur of the theatre, Alexei Bakhrushin.

Sixty years ago Bakhrushin began to collect all kinds of documents and objects relating to the history of the Russian theatre. Fifteen years later he offered his unique collection to the Academy of Sciences. "Believing that a collection of the kind my museum now represents . . . ought by rights to be available to the entire educated public of Russia," he wrote, "I feel I cannot allow it to remain in my personal possession any longer; it should be the property of the state."

The idea of starting a theatrical museum was in itself unique. Nowhere in the world was there anything like it. The museums of the Paris Opera or of the *Comédie Française*, though admirable, related only to the history of these two theatres. Essentially, they represented a specific type of portrait gallery.

The collection Bakhrushin started has multiplied with every year, until today it consists of upwards of 460,000 items, including more than 200,000 photographs and negatives, and more than 30,000 models and sketches of sets and costumes by distinguished stage designers. While each of these items is interesting in itself, together they present a methodical picture of the development of Russian theatre from its origins to our day.



Fyodor Volkov. By A. Losenko (1763).

Visitors invariably find their attention attracted to the stands devoted to the domestic theatres run by big landowners in the 18th century, where the actors were all serfs. Materials characterizing the life and work of the great actor Fyodor Volkov, who in 1750 founded in Yaroslavl Russia's first public theatre, hold a place of honour in the museum. The history of professional Russian theatre begins with him.

Many of the exhibits testify to the close cultural ties between representatives of the Russian theatre and eminent European actors. For instance, there is a portrait of Lekain done by Van Loo which that celebrated French actor presented to Volkov's famous contemporary, Ivan Dmitrevsky. The latter in his turn presented a portrait of himself to Lekain. A particularly valuable item is the manuscript copy of Racine's *Esther* that Rachel presented to Shchepkin and that later passed into the possession of Yermolova.

Speaking over the radio on the 60th anniversary of the Bakhrushin Museum,



The M. N. Yermolova Hall

People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. A. Yablochkina said: "Not long ago I visited the Yermolova exhibition at the museum. . . . It was a pleasure to me, a contemporary of Yermolova, who played on the stage with her and who admired her great talent, to see how many people come to this exhibition, how fondly they examine her photographs, the modest dress she wore to concert performances, the copies of her parts, how reverently they listen to her recorded voice. Seeing this brought home to me more clearly than ever that the art of a great actor does not die; thanks to the rich material collected in our central theatrical museum it continues to live in men's hearts and memories."

On its 60th anniversary the museum offered the public a new exposition of material illustrating the history of Soviet theatre. Besides numerous photographs and documents, the history of the theatre is here recorded in portrait paintings and sculptured busts, and in sketches of settings and costumes by prominent stage designers.

There is a model of the boxes and stage of the Bolshoi Theatre from which visitors can hardly tear themselves away. A button is pressed and the figures of spectators appear in the boxes, while the curtain parts on the first scene of I. Dzerzhinsky's opera *And Quiet Flows the Don*. One after the other, all four acts of the opera are shown. This

model, a cleverly designed diorama, won a Grand Prize at the World Fair in Paris in 1937.

To pass from stand to stand is to read page after page of a fascinating book about the Soviet theatre. In plays that have come to be classics—*The Storm* by V. Bill-Belotserkovsky at the Trade Unions' Theatre, *Lyubov Yarovaya* by K. Trenev at the Maly, *Armoured Train 14-69* by V. Ivanov at the Art Theatre, *Poem of*



The Town-Mayor in The Inspector-General (a drawing by Alexander Pushkin)

the Axe by N. Pogodin at the Theatre of Revolution—one can trace the gradual formation of the character of the Soviet man.

The many exhibits illustrating the theatre art in the different Soviet republics give one a picture of theatre in the U.S.S.R. as a multinational art.

Producers, scenic designers and actors frequently visit the Bakhrushin Museum. One wants to see the models and sketches for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*. A second comes to see the make-up Yuzhin wore in the part of Othello. A third wants to hear a recording of a scene from A. Ostrovsky's play *The Warm Heart* as performed by Tarkhanov and Khmelyov. A fourth is interested in Stanislavsky's *mise en scène* for Gorky's *The Philistines*. By all these and other means the museum is helping to pass on and develop the traditions of the theatre arts.

But it is not only theatre craftsmen who are attracted to the Bakhrushin Museum. In the course of a month it generally counts more than 10,000 visitors—stu-



Boris Godunov. A drawing by Chaliapin.

dents, school children and simply lovers of the theatre. For their benefit special lectures demonstrated by lantern slides and recordings are arranged. Displays of its exhibits in the lobbies of theatres, factory clubs and palaces of culture are regularly organized by the museum.

50th Anniversary of the Death of Jules Verne

Few writers have been so dear to the younger generation as Jules Verne. Books by Jules Verne never remain on the shelves of children's libraries for any length of time. Boys and girls read them with breathless absorption, dreaming of wonderful discoveries and of travels to distant lands; his books are fascinating reading to our future physicists, geologists, navigators, inventors.

Nor is it only children who love and enjoy Jules Verne's novels.

Soviet men and women keenly appreciate this outstanding humanist writer who was an opponent of all oppression and racial discrimination, who hated aggressive wars and believed that some day all men would join forces in peaceful co-operation for scientific progress. Many of Jules Verne's books reveal strong sympathy with the people's fight for national liberation. The Soviet reader is drawn to Captain Nemo, proud fighter against injustice, to fearless Captain Hatteras, to Jacques Paganel, eccentric and absent-minded but sincere in his dreams of a better future for mankind.

While Jules Verne was known and loved by the reading public in pre-revolutionary Russia, in the Soviet Union he is read by millions.

The first Soviet edition of the works of Jules Verne appeared in 1928, when the *Zemlya i Fabrika* Publishing House put out two 12-volume series, each volume containing one or two novels. This edition, which included all the writer's important works, was illustrated and was prefaced by a critical and biographical essay. It also contained a chronological list of all Jules Verne's books.

Desiring to impress upon the reader Jules Verne's remarkable gift for basing his fantasies on real trends in scientific development, a gift which enabled him to foresee many subsequent discoveries and inventions, the publishers included popular scientific articles in some of the volumes. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, for example, was followed by an article entitled "The Nautilus of Our Day"; *Around the World in Eighty Days*—by an article describing the past and present possibilities of such a journey. *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* was accompanied by an article about Arctic exploration and research, and *Floating City* by an article entitled "From the Primitive Canoe to a Modern Floating City."

Two years later, in 1930, the need for another edition of Jules Verne's works

was already evident. The *Vokrug Sveta* (Around the World) magazine issued a supplement of 6 volumes, containing 11 novels. This supplement was printed in 95,000 copies.

Many of the works of Jules Verne have appeared in other languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. Over one million copies of *Captain Grant's Children*, for instance, have been printed in 12 languages besides Russian. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* has been published 18 times in 9 languages. *Around the World in Eighty Days*—10 times in 5 languages. There have been repeated editions of *From the Earth to the Moon*, *Upside Down*, *The Fifteen-Year Old Captain*, *The Mysterious Island*, *The 500,000,000 of the Beguma* etc. The Textbook Publishing House has put out a number of Jules Verne's novels in French with vocabularies and grammatical appendices.

At present, a 12-volume edition of the collected works of Jules Verne is being prepared for press by the State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry. The majori-

ty of novels are arranged chronologically except for a few that deal with a single subject, as *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon*, for example, which are in the same volume. Many of the translations have been made anew. The edition is furnished with scientific and critical commentaries. The Publishing House for Juvenile Literature is preparing a 5-volume edition of Jules Verne's works.

In *The History of French Literature*, which is being prepared for press by the Gorky Institute of World Literature of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, there is a chapter devoted to the work of Jules Verne in Volume 3 which covers the period from the Paris Commune to our day.

The remarkable success enjoyed by *Captain Grant's Children*, *The Mysterious Island*, *The Fifteen-Year Old Captain* and numerous other Soviet films based on novels by Jules Verne also bears witness to the great French writer's popularity in the U.S.S.R.

Henryk Wieniawski

(75th Anniversary of the Death of an Outstanding
Polish Composer)

The name of Henryk Wieniawski belongs to one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of violin music. The playing of this distinguished Polish violinist and composer was an assertion of truth and humanity in art. A virtuoso who combined technical mastery with fiery passion and deep feeling, he showed violinists how to attain that degree of expressiveness which is the height of achievement on the concert stage. As a composer of excellent violin pieces, he gave vivid expression to the national spirit of his people.

All his life Wieniawski had close ties with Russia. It was in Russia that he first attracted the attention of music-lovers, giving independent concerts in St. Petersburg at the age of thirteen. That was in 1848, immediately after his graduation from the Paris Conservatoire. And it was in Russia that his mature years were spent—he resided in St. Petersburg from 1860 to 1872. As a professor in the Conservatoire and a Court soloist, Wieniawski engaged in varied musical activities. Some of Russia's finest violinists were among his pupils.

Wieniawski's style as a violinist evolved under the influence of the progressive ideas of a time when Russian

social thought was on the rise and when a significant realistic art was emerging. In music this was the period of the "Big Five" and of Chaikovsky, in painting—of the *Peredvizhniki*, in literature—of the realistic novel. It was the time of Moussorgsky, Chaikovsky, Repin, Tolstoy. Wieniawski was on terms of friendship with Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein, Chaikovsky, Ostrovsky, Turgenev, Aivazovsky and other leading personalities in Russian culture.

During a concert tour of Russia in 1880 Wieniawski fell ill; he died in Moscow on March 31, the same year. "We are losing an incomparable violinist and very gifted composer," Chaikovsky wrote on hearing of his illness. "In my opinion he is extremely talented as a composer."

Wieniawski's works are very popular in the U.S.S.R. and are constantly found on concert programmes. Well-known violinists, including Galina Barinova, sometimes present entire programmes of his music. Soviet concert-goers are particularly fond of his *Faust Fantasia*, *The Second Concerto in D-minor*, *Souvenir de Moscou*, mazurkas and polonaises, *Légende*, *Scherzo-Tarantella*. Wieniawski's music is studied in music schools and conservatoires and helps Soviet violinists attain

a high degree of virtuosity. The Soviet violinists David Oistrakh, Boris Goldstein, Igor Oistrakh, Julian Sitkovetsky, Olga Parkhomenko and Marina Yashvili took part in the first and second international Wieniawski violin contests in 1935 and 1952.

The works of Wieniawski are published in thousands of copies in the U.S.S.R.

The State Publishing House for Music is now issuing his selected violin pieces and a study of his works in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of his death.

Soviet musicians honour the memory of the great son of the Polish people whose work played such an important part in the development of Russian violin music.

Kazan University: 150th Anniversary



Kazan University, one of the oldest in the country, has celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The list of those who graduated at it includes many famous men. In 1887 V. I. Lenin attended it. N. Lobachevsky, the father of non-Euclidean geometry, studied and then taught there from 1827 to 1846. Other distinguished Russian

scientists trained within its walls were the chemists N. Zinin and A. Butlerov, the astronomer I. Simonov, the physiologist V. Bekhterev, the surgeon A. Vishnevsky.

At different times the writers Leo Tolstoy, S. Aksakov and P. Melnikov-Pechersky, the artist V. Jacobi and the composer M. Balakirev all attended it.

Course in Scenario-Writing

For a month 56 writers from Moscow and Leningrad, Lithuania, Latvia, Uzbekistan and other republics engaged in writing new screen-plays, attended a course in scenario-writing. Leading Soviet film workers addressed them on such subjects as "Working on a Scenario" (S. Gerasimov), "The Nature of Cinematography, Its Past and Future" (M. Romm), "Screening Works of Fic-

tion" (B. Chirskov), "The Technique of Taking Trick and Combined Shots" (A. Ptushko).

There were also lectures by A. Dovzhenko, S. Vasiliev, G. Roshal, S. Yutkevich, E. Gabrilovich, I. Kheifits and other noted Soviet film directors.

The writers discussed each other's scenarios, several of which were accepted for production.

Chaikovsky Monument

Under the auspices of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. a statue of Pyotr Ilyich Chaikovsky has been erected at the entrance to the Moscow Conservatoire.

Chaikovsky is depicted by the sculptress Vera Mukhina in a moment of creative inspiration, with one hand flung out as though he were counting off the time of a melody he has just composed and is about to set down. The three-metre figure has been cast in bronze and set on a pedestal of rose-coloured granite.

Extending from the monument in a semi-circle are granite benches backed by a cast-iron grille. The pattern of the grille is formed by bars from the composer's most popular works.

Karelo-Finnish Composers

Symphonic music was well to the fore at the concert programmes of the third plenum of the Composers' Union of the Karelo-Finnish S.S.R. The greatest acclaim was won by G. Sinisalo's *Variations on Finnish Folk Themes* and R. Pergament's *Vep Rhapsody*.



Eskimo Language and Folk-lore

The Leningrad branch of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences Press has issued a scientific study of *The Language and*

Folk-lore of the Eskimos. The book was compiled by the Academy's Institute of Philology.

Scientific Session on the Literature of the G. D. R.

A scientific session devoted to the literature of the German Democratic Republic was recently held in Moscow by the Gorky Institute of World Literature (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences) and the Union of Soviet Writers.

Konstantin Fedin opened the proceedings with an analysis of progressive German literature as a literature inspired by the struggle for a unified, peace-loving, democratic Germany. He spoke of the Soviet people's deep respect for the great traditions of progressive German culture

and related his impressions of a trip to the G.D.R.

The papers discussed general literary problems in the G.D.R. and the work of contemporary German writers (the poetry of Johannes R. Becher, the dramaturgy of Friedrich Wolf, the journalism of Arnold Zweig).

The session concluded with readings of the latest translations from Becher, Weinert, Kuba, Hermlin and other modern poets of the G.D.R. by the Soviet poets Levik, Zenkevich, Zheleznov, Ginsburg.

In Memory of Lermontov

A memorial plaque has been affixed to the house at 2 Molchanovka Street, in Moscow, where Mikhail Lermontov

lived in 1830-1832. In this house Lermontov wrote *Confession*, *A Strange Man*, *Spaniards*. and part of *Demon*.

Indian Literature

Modern Indian literature was the subject of a literary meeting arranged by the Union of Soviet Writers and the Institute of Orientalology (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences). The meeting was opened by B. Polevoy, A. Dyakov, D. Sc. (History) reviewed the principal stages in the development of Indian literature from ancient times to our day, dwelling especially on the work of such eminent authors as Ra-

bindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Sarat Chandra Chatterji and Prem Chand, and then went on to analyse the work of modern Indian writers, among them Mulk Raj Anand, Krishan Chandar, Ahmed Abbas, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.

Ahmed Abbas brought the meeting greetings from the progressive writers of India and the Indian people.

Archeological Finds

An ancient boat 7.55 metres long has been discovered in the outcrops of the steep bank of a small river near the village of Shchuchye in Voronezh region. The boat was hollowed out of a thick oak trunk. Its massive bottom and sides are rounded, the bow and stern pointed. Unlike other ancient vessels of the same type, this boat has peculiar devices resembling large lugs attached to its bow that were evidently intended for mooring the heavy vessel or perhaps for attaching long logs along its sides to give it greater stability in the water.

The boat has several seats made of bars that were inserted in grooves in either side. One of the bars has been preserved intact.

Professor M. E. Foss, head of the expedition of the Institute of Material Culture (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences) states in his announcement:

"The boat was made with an instrument that left distinct marks in the form of short groove-like depressions like those archeologists have observed in ancient objects of the stone age that were made with a stone adze. In my thirty years of experience, this is the first time a whole boat of such ancient origin has been discovered in the U.S.S.R.

"The only similar find hitherto has been part of the stern of a boat discovered towards the end of the last century when the Ladoga canal was built. However, it was hard to picture the general appearance and size of the vessel from this one fragment.

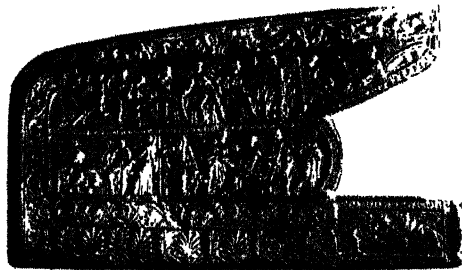
"The present boat was built at the end of the stone or beginning of the bronze

age, that is, about four thousand years ago. A geological investigation of the site of the find has been made by Professor M. Gritsenko of Voronezh University.

"The boat has been turned over to the U.S.S.R. Museum of History, where scientists have taken the necessary measures to preserve the wood."

Staff members of the local museum have excavated an ancient mound near Melitopol (Ukrainian S.S.R.). At a depth of six metres they unearthed about 200 ancient gold coins. Their major find was a gold coating of a Scythian quiver dating from the 4th or 3rd century B.C.

Scientists have identified the Melitopol mound as the burial site of wealthy Scythians.



A coating of a Scythian quiver

Subterranean burial vaults were discovered under the mound and within them various utensils and several thousand gold and bronze objects, many of them ornamented with skilfully made drawings.

SOVIET LITERATURE

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DECISIONS

OF THE BUREAU OF THE WORLD PEACE COUNCIL

DECLARATION OF THE BUREAU OF THE WORLD PEACE COUNCIL

At the outset of 1955, two threats to the peace of the world have become definite: the remilitarization of Germany and the steps taken to prepare and justify atomic war. These threats come just at the moment when new prospects of peace are opening before the peoples. It is now a matter of the acts of responsible governments and no longer only the declarations of politicians and generals. These acts deliberately flout the desires of the peoples concerned and world opinion.

The remilitarization of Germany and the obstacles placed by SEATO in the way of a peaceful solution of the problems of Asia underline the exceptional gravity of the measures adopted by the Council of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization.

These measures are designed to regularize atomic war, which has been condemned by the conscience of mankind and is contrary to international law, and to persuade public opinion to accept it as a necessity. They can lead to the automatic unleashing of atomic war in Asia as well as in Europe. From now on they threaten with this peril every country on every continent.

The remilitarization of Germany and regularization of atomic war are closely linked. They are the fruits of a single policy founded on the division of the world into two blocs, the drive for positions of strength and recourse to war in prosecuting international differences. The peoples know from experience that this policy can lead only to economic chaos, poverty and war. The world peace movement calls upon them to appreciate the magnitude of the new dangers and to avert them by all the means in their power.

The concerted action of the peoples can end the policy of blocs. It can oblige the governments to negotiate to disarm and to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

Mankind will not passively allow itself to be led toward the disasters of atomic war. The problem is not to calculate at what staff or government level atomic war may be decided on or to draw distinctions between so-called tactical and strategic weapons. The task is to reject the destruction, oppression and suffering that it entails, to ensure to all the peoples of the world their independence and the right to develop their own wealth

and take together the path towards security and prosperity. It is to fulfil this task that the appeal to maintain the struggle against the remilitarization of Germany and the appeal to organize a great signature campaign to stop the use of atomic weapons have been issued.

It is to this same end that the call has been issued for a great world assembly on May 22, 1955, in Helsinki that shall bring together representatives of all tendencies and organizations for peace.

Vienna, January 19, 1955

APPEAL TO THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

The peoples of Europe refuse to accept the Wehrmacht.

They oppose the revival—a bare ten years after the end of the war—of the army which brought death and destruction down upon all Europe.

They are revolted by the idea that atomic weapons should be put at the disposal of Hitler's former generals.

The peoples will never accept this crime.

The ratification of the Wehrmacht treaties is far from being achieved.

In London and Paris when the parliaments voted on the ratification not even one half the members supported them. The governments, like the parliaments, have been obliged openly to acknowledge the hostility of the peoples concerned but they are resolved to override the opposition of the peoples of Europe and in particular the growing opposition of the German people themselves.

The peoples cannot be bound by decisions adopted by parliaments against their will.

Today, the governments that signed the London and Paris agreements can no longer cover up the tragic consequences of the creation of a new Wehrmacht: the remilitarization of Western Germany would result in the setting up of armed forces in Eastern Germany. It would speed up the arms race; it would make the peaceful reunification of Germany impossible for years to come and would prevent any possibility of the collective organization of European security.

The World Council of Peace calls on the men and women of every country to put all their strength, all their determination and all their courage into preventing the ratification and implementation of the London and Paris agreements.

It calls on all the men and women who have been waging such a magnificent struggle against the rearmament of Germany, and on all those also who are today becoming aware of the imminent danger which it involves, to join and multiply their efforts to oppose the revival of German militarism and to organize the security of Europe with the participation of a peace-loving Germany.

Europe supported by all the peoples of the world will not let a new Wehrmacht be thrust upon her.

Vienna, January 19, 1955

APPEAL TO THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Certain governments are preparing to let loose atomic war. They are trying to make the peoples accept it as inevitable.

The use of atomic weapons would result in a war of extermination.

We declare that any government that lets loose atomic war will forfeit the trust of its people and find itself condemned by every people of the world.

Now and in the future we shall oppose those who organize atomic war.

We demand the destruction of all stocks of atomic weapons wherever they may be and the immediate stopping of their manufacture.

Vienna, January 19, 1955

Frederic Joliot-Curie (France), President of the World Peace Council;

Gabriel d'Arboussier (Dark Africa), Vice-President of the World Peace Council, lawyer;

Mme. Eugenie Cotton (France), Vice-President of the World Peace Council, President of the Women's International Democratic Federation;

Alexander Fadeyev (U.S.S.R.), Vice-President of the World Peace Council, writer;

Leopold Infeld (Poland), Vice-President of the World Peace Council, professor of physics;

Kuo Mo-jo (China), Vice-President of the World Peace Council, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences;

Jorge Amado (Brazil), writer, Chairman of the National Association of Brazilian Writers;

Laurent Casanova (France), deputy, former Minister;

Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie (France), deputy, former Minister;

Ilya Ehrenburg (U.S.S.R.), writer, deputy;

Wilhelm Elfes (Germany), former burgomaster of München-Gladbach, Chairman of the German League for Unity, Peace and Freedom;

James Endicott (Canada), Chairman of the Canadian Congress for Peace;

Nazim Hikmet (Turkey), poet;

Josef Hromadka (Czechoslovakia), Dean of the Theological Faculty in Prague;

Alexander Korneichuk (U.S.S.R.), playwright, deputy;

Jan Mukarovski (Czechoslovakia), Rector of the Karlova University in Prague;

Denis Nowell Pritt (Britain), lawyer, President of the British Peace Committee;

Louis Saillant (France), General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions;

Emilio Sereni (Italy), senator;

Mrs. Jessie Street (Australia), former Australian representative at the U.N. inauguration conference in San Francisco;

Antoine Tabet (Lebanon), architect;

Nikolai Tikhonov (U.S.S.R.), poet, Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Peace Committee;

William Waynwright (Britain), writer, Organizing Secretary of the British Peace Committee;

Jean Laffitte (France), Secretary-General of the World Peace Council, writer;
Mme. Isabelle Blume (Belgium), Secretary of the World Peace Council, former deputy;
Vincent Duncan Jones (Britain), Secretary of the World Peace Council, publicist;
Panteleimon Gulyaev (U.S.S.R.), Secretary of the World Peace Council, journalist;
Li Yi-mang (China), Secretary of the World Peace Council, economist;
Ivor Montagu (Britain), Secretary of the World Peace Council, film director;
Riccardo Lombardi (Italy), deputy, former Minister, member of the Bureau of the World Peace Council;
Abderrahmane Bouchama (Algeria), architect, Chairman of the Algerian Committee for Peace;
Heinrich Brandweiner (Austria), professor of international law, Chairman of the Austrian Peace Council;
Alberto Cavalcanti (Brazil), film director;
Robert Chambeiron (France), former deputy;
Jacques Denis (France), General Secretary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth;
Ostap Dluski (Poland), deputy, editor;
Ambrogio Donini (Italy), senator;
Erwin Eckert (Germany), Landtag deputy, Chairman of the West-German Peace Fighters' Committee;
Ernst Fischer (Austria), writer, former Minister;
Nino Fogliaresi (Italy), professor;
Ragnar Forbech (Norway), pastor, chaplain of the Cathedral in Oslo;
Sergei Gerasimov (U.S.S.R.), film director, deputy;
Kaoru Yasui (Japan), professor of international law at the Hoshi University, Secretary-General of the Japanese National Council sponsoring a petition for the prohibition of the atomic and hydrogen weapons;
Kinkazu Sayonzi (Japan), former member of the House of Councillors, director of the newspaper *Nishi Nippon Shimbun*;
Liu Kuan-yi (China), Secretary-General of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and Against American Aggression;
Liu Chang-sheng (China), Deputy-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions;
Clarenzo Menotti (Italy), former senator;
Parameswaran (India), Secretary of the All-India Peace Council;
Erwin Scharf (Austria), writer, Chairman of the Socialist Workers' Party of Austria;
Zekeria Sertel (Turkey), writer, journalist;
Valentin Sorokin (U.S.S.R.), economist;
Pandit Sunderlal (India), writer;
Alfredo Varela (Argentina), writer;
Paul Wandel (Germany), deputy, former Minister;
Heinz Willman (Germany), Secretary-General of the German Peace Council;
Jorge Zalamea (Colombia), writer, former Minister;
Teitelboim (Chile), writer;
Heinz Altschultz (Austria), Secretary-General of the Austrian Peace Council;
Mme. Janosne Bugar (Hungary), Secretary of the All-Hungarian Peace Council;

Nestor Grancelli (Argentina), lawyer, former President of the Federation of Universities;
Mme. Rosy Hollender (Belgium), Secretary-General of the Belgian Peace Union;
Isa Ibrahim (Indonesia), Secretary of the Indonesian National Peace Committee;
Joris Ivens (Holland), film director;
Felix Iversen (Finland), Vice-President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations;
Anton Strand (Sweden), Secretary of the Swedish National Peace Committee;
Suroso (Indonesia), Secretary-General of the Indonesian National Peace Committee;
Luis Vidales (Colombia), writer;
Fernand Vigne (France), Secretary-General of the French National Peace Council;
Mme. Mariam Vire-Tuominen (Finland), Secretary-General of the Finnish Peace Supporters;
Jakob Wolf (Holland), journalist;
Bruno Bernini (Italy), President of the World Federation of Democratic Youth;
Bertolini, Secretary of the International Federation of Resistance Fighters;
Paul Delanoue, Secretary-General of the World Federation of Teachers' Unions;
Luigi Grassi, Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions;
Zoya Ivanova, Secretary of the Women's International Democratic Federation;
Mme. Molly Mandell, Secretary of the Women's International Democratic Federation;
Mme. Hilde Neumann, jurist, International Association of Democratic Lawyers;
Hsieh Pang-ting, Vice-President of the International Union of Students;
Taptikov, professor, World Federation of Teachers' Unions;
Sorin Toma (Rumania), journalist;
Jaroslav Iwaszkiewicz (Poland), writer, Chairman of the All-Polish Peace Committee;
Leon Kruckowski, Chairman of the Polish Writers' Union;
Wiktor Klosiewicz, Chairman of the Central Council of Polish Trade Unions;
Max Cosyns (Belgium), professor of physics;
Mme. Farge, member of the Presidium of the French National Peace Council;
Georgi Pirinsky (Bulgaria), Vice-Chairman of the Executive Bureau of the National Peace Committee.

DECLARATION BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE BOARD OF THE UNION OF SOVIET WRITERS

Men of peace in all parts of the world learned with indignation and alarm of the decision by the Council of the aggressive North Atlantic *bloc* to plan the unleashing of atomic war.

The instigators of another war are trying to persuade people that war is inevitable. To deceive them they prate about the "defensive" nature of atomic weapons. All their dishonest propaganda is intended to frighten and demoralize people, to weaken their will to resist. But the peoples of the world have the power and the duty to disrupt the criminal plans of the organizers of atomic war.

The appeal of the World Peace Council against preparations for atomic war aroused a most warm and lively response in the hearts of all honest people in the world.

Soviet literature, true to the principle of Socialist humanism, has always enunciated the idea of peace and international friendship. It does so today. Soviet writers are at one with the whole Soviet people in their stand for peace. But those who interpret this longing for peace as a sign of weakness are making a grave miscalculation. Everyone remembers lessons of history showing what fate meets those aggressors who set foot on our soil.

The vital interests of all peoples demand the prohibition of atomic weapons. Atomic energy, one of the greatest discoveries of our times, must not be allowed to become a weapon of death and destruction. There is another way of using it - the only way acceptable to mankind. The Soviet Union was the first to show how atomic energy can be used for peaceful, creative ends and is ready to share its experience with other lands. The power of nuclear fission can and must be made to work for human welfare.

When in the years of severe test the Soviet people were defending the freedom and independence of their land against the Nazi invaders and bringing liberation from the fascist yoke to the peoples of the world, Soviet writers stood side by side with their courageous fellow-citizens.

After the war the Soviet people, true to their peace-loving traditions, came out in defence of world peace against the threat of another war. Soviet writers joined them in the struggle for peace and international security.

The protest of the World Peace Council against atomic warfare and its call for the prohibition of atomic weapons are in full accord with the hopes of every Soviet man, woman and child. With all their hearts, Soviet writers welcome and support the World Peace Council's Appeal. They call on all writers in the world who respect the interests of their people to join the ranks of those who are actively defending peace, and to exercise their talent and their influence in the noble cause of forestalling the outbreak of another war. It is the clear duty of every honest man to oppose the threat of atomic warfare. In this hour of decision no one has the right to stay outside the struggle. Mankind will not forgive those who remain indifferent and neutral.

Soviet writers are firmly convinced that the united will of all peace-loving humanity will frustrate the criminal plans of the organizers of atomic war. Peace will conquer war.

Vasili AZHAYEV, Nikolai BAZHAN, Leonid LEONOV,
Boris POLEVOY, Dmitri POLIKARPOV, Konstantin
SIMONOV, Vasili SMIRNOV, Alexei SURKOV,
Nikolai TIKHONOV, Alexander FADEYEV, Konstan-
tin FEDIN.



SERGEI VASILYEV

OVER THE PEACEFUL LAND

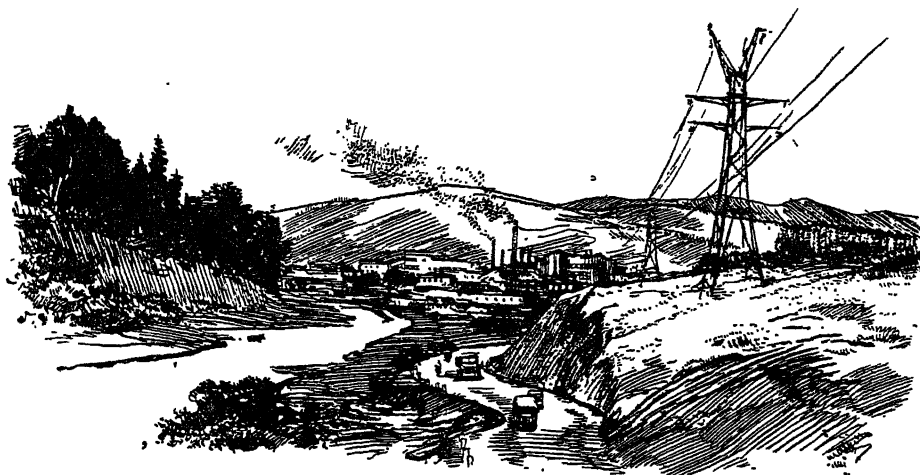
Alma-Ata behind our back
and Moscow's airport far ahead,
along its smooth aerial track,
outstripping clouds, the aeroplane sped.
And I, no novice in the skies,
could not appease my avid eyes
and never tired of gazing down.
With fields and forests, green and brown,
enveloped in a haze of blue,
the land of Soviets lay in view.
In all its loveliness it shone;
now robes of dawn it would put on,
now clouds would cover it with silk,
as light as down, as white as milk;
now purple with the evening's glow,
its mighty mountain chains would show,
or harvest fields of gleaming gold
beneath the aeroplane would unfold.

Around, as far as loving eye
can reach, ripe winter-wheat fields lie.
The lights of building projects glare
in countless clusters everywhere.
Across the plains run heavy trains,
and herds of grazing cattle roam.
With Toil and Plenty, Autumn reigns
throughout this land—my boundless home.
All hail, my thriving native soil!
My greetings, Fatherland of Toil!
You men in foundries, mines and farms,
you men of arts and men at arms!

Keep up your patriotic flame,
the source of all this country's fame!
For everything she holds is ours—
her light, her poetry, her flowers,
these harnessed rivers, vanquished seas,
these M.T.S. and factories,
this wonder-aeroplane that flies
with peaceful thunder through the skies—
their owner is the common folk,
whose fetters Great October broke.

Translated by D. Rottenberg





YELENA KATERLI

The Long Road

Chapter One

1

NIKOLAI Zhukov and Andrei Korolev decided that they would take jobs in the same town.

They had grown up together, neighbours in a cramped Moscow flat; it was inconceivable that they should go different ways now. And really, there was not the least reason why they should: they left college at the same time, and while Nikolai was putting the final touches to the design he was submitting for his engineer's diploma, Andrei was preparing to sit for his finals.

In Moscow, spring was in full course but the two friends were insensible to its breath. They did not notice the snow melt, the trees blur darkly in the April showers, the planting of the tulip bulbs in the city gardens. Day and night they stuck to their books, forgetting meal-times, and very likely they would still have been going about in winter coats and fur hats had Nikolai's mother not put their caps out on the hall table, taken their raincoats out of the skip and hung them up beside the mirror.

The spring took Nikolai completely by surprise the day he received his diploma and with it a job. When he had signed the necessary papers, he went out of doors feeling prouder and happier than he had ever felt in his life, and it was then that he suddenly noticed that the sun was burning hot, that the passers-by were wearing gay, light-coloured clothes and that down the middle of the street moved a water-spraying car whose

jets shot right up to the pavement. For a few moments Nikolai looked at this car as if he were seeing it for the first time in his life, then laughing happily he walked aimlessly on.

Stopping outside a book shop, he took his papers out of his pocket and glanced through them again.

"'Nikolai Zhukov, mechanical engineer.' H'm, that's something!"

He assumed a dignified air and straightened his shoulders. His glance fell on the shop window. Against a background of brown, red and green bindings he saw a lanky, spare figure in a tight-fitting faded mackintosh and a cap that was much too young for him tilted on the back of his head.

Nikolai frowned and straightened that cap. Putting the papers back into his pocket, he looked around, wondering how to lend something to his appearance more in keeping with his present situation. The window of the next shop displayed a plaster head of a young man with a broad-brimmed blue hat on it. Noting the solid look of this young man, Nikolai marched into the shop and bought the blue hat with the broad brim without asking to be shown any others.

"No need to wrap it up," he told the shop assistant shyly. "Wrap this up instead."

"This" was the cap which he snatched off his shock of thick fair hair. The dark-blue hat lay lightly and attractively on his head; as she wrapped up the cap, the girl assistant said politely:

"You look much better in a hat."

Nikolai stole a sidelong glance at the mirror. Yes, the hat changed him out of all recognition. He had suddenly become stern. Even his nose seemed to turn up less. The mackintosh did not look so tight across the shoulders.

He left the shop feeling much more self-confident and grown-up than a few minutes earlier. Not Kolya Zhukov, the only son of a school-teacher called Maria Mikhailovna Zhukova, not the undergrad who but the day before had been waiting anxiously for his exam results, but a man about to set out on serious work in state service was walking along a Moscow street. He walked with steady unhurried gait among people hastening about their everyday business, quite unaware that the young man in the shabby mackintosh that was too small for him would be leaving in a few days' time for the distant Urals to build machines that no one had ever built before.

Taking another look at himself in the shop window, Nikolai wondered what Nina would say to the hat. She might approve of it, she might simply not notice the change in his attire, or perhaps she would dislike it, the way she had disliked that suede jacket with the zip fastener.

That time he had thrown the suede jacket away, or, to be more exact, he had given it to a fellow who had been very glad to have it. Nina, of course, did not know that. Nikolai's mother, incidentally, was delighted.

"It made you look like a clown, and anyway it was utterly useless," she said. "Let's in the rain, but doesn't let the air through in hot weather; it's tight in the back and flops like a sack in front. That grey sports jacket of yours looks much smarter."

The fact of the matter, of course, was not that she liked the grey sports jacket which an old dressmaker of hers had cut out of a summer coat, but that the suede jacket was a present to Nikolai from his father whose name was also Nikolai Zhukov, who also was an engineer, and who had left his wife and son many years ago. That Nikolai Zhukov had another family now; he lived in Moscow, worked in some head office and hardly ever met his former wife.



Would his father congratulate him on his degree or not? Nikolai at once felt angry with himself for the thought. As if he needed his congratulations! They got on perfectly well without him, did not miss him, tried never to speak of him and now, if you please, he was expecting congratulations.

Setting his hat at a slight tilt and unbuttoning his mackintosh, Nikolai walked with an independent air into a large, well-appointed shop. On one of the shelves stood a white marble ink-stand that he had long coveted. Nikolai found this ink-stand very pretty: on a polished

base, between two ink-wells, reared a large bear on whose outstretched paws one was probably supposed to put one's pen after writing. In addition there was a tall vase for pencils and a blotter with another bear on it. He wanted to buy this for his mother.

Once, at the end of his school years, Nikolai and his class-mates bought a similar ink-stand as a present for their beloved maths teacher. The teacher was full of praise for it and told the boys that she would remember them when she corrected the home-work of the top class in the following year.

Nikolai's mother had no ink-stand. When she sat over the exercise books of an evening, she set an ordinary safety bottle of ink in front of her. Nikolai had long dreamed of giving her that handsome set. He resisted resolutely the shop assistant's suggestion that he should buy another, darker one instead.

"It's more practical. This one will show the ink-spots at once."

"But the white one's prettier," Nikolai insisted. "I'm buying it for a lady."

"Ah, if it's for ornament and not for use that's another matter. So it's a present. I'll pack it suitably."

He put the marble ink-stand in a cardboard box, tied it up with a red silk ribbon and handed it to Nikolai.

"Careful. It's heavy. The ribbon might snap."

Clutching the parcel to his chest Nikolai left the shop, made a dash for a bus and was home in a few minutes.

"Mother," he shouted as he burst into the room, "I'm going to the Urals. It's all settled."

There was no reply. The room was empty. On the table stood a glass of milk and a plate of sandwiches with a note beside them.

"Gone to school. Back at six. Be sure to drink the milk. Mother."

Without taking off his hat or coat Nikolai ate the sandwiches, drank the milk and wrote in Indian ink in a fine delicate hand on a small square card:

"Mother.

Thank you for my degree.

Your son."

Nikolai placed the box with his present in the middle of the table, attached the card to it, cleared away the plate and the empty glass, and went out. In the yard a little girl who lived next door looked at his hat with respect and delight, and when his unhurried sedate pace had taken him to the gate, cried shrilly behind his back:

"Zhuk¹ Zhukov's bought himself a hat. Look how he's swanking, girls."

Nikolai put on speed to get through the gate as soon as possible but the gate swung in his face, and into the yard burst Andrei.

"Everything fixed up? Where are you going?" Andrei asked him. "What town? What region? We've got an appointments board sitting, and I've got to decide where to go."

And suddenly it occurred to Nikolai that it would be difficult, maybe impossible, for Andrei to leave with him. Without replying to the questions, he stopped and looked at Andrei with a worried look on his face.

"Why don't you say something?" asked Andrei, surprised. "Show me your appointment card."

"You know, I didn't realize," muttered Nikolai, taking out his papers. "It's not a town; it probably doesn't even have a newspaper. Verkhnyaya Kamenka. It isn't even a district centre. . . ."

"No newspaper? Rot!" Andrei retorted, looking at his papers. "There's no such place that doesn't have a newspaper. Come along with me and we'll discuss everything on the way."

They went into the street and took a trolley-bus to the university. Only then did Andrei notice the new hat.

"Looks fine," he said, examining it carefully. "I think I'll get one like it for myself."

If anyone had asked Nikolai whom he cared for more—his mother or Andrei—it would have made him angry, but he would not have been able to reply. He loved his mother dearly. She ran his life, she asked nothing for herself, she devoted herself entirely to his interests.

Andrei, who had lost his mother when he was five years old, had the deepest respect for Nikolai's mother.

"When you've got a mother like yours you can easily live without an old man," Andrei had said long ago when he noticed Nikolai casting envious looks at his father. "Your mother earns as much as my dad does, and she doesn't wallop you. Oh, if you only knew the way my dad wallops me. With a strap. Word of honour he does."

This was pure bluff: Andrei's father had never raised his hand against him. But Andrei knew that Nikolai envied him his father and he wanted

¹ Zhuk—beetle.

to console him by any means. The more so because in the depth of his heart he considered that if a chap is to have only one parent then better let it be a father. Andrei was two years older than Nikolai and his attitude towards him was slightly protective. When they were at the same school, he helped Nikolai with his lessons. When sides were picked for a game of volley-ball in the yard, Andrei always chose Nikolai. And Nikolai, who generally could not stand any sort of coddling, never minded being helped by Andrei.

He was devoted to Andrei, the way a boy is to an elder brother. He brooked no criticism of Andrei even when it came from his mother or from Andrei's father. He imitated Andrei in everything. Even when Andrei vowed that he would be a poet, Nikolai started writing poetry on the quiet. And when the school Comsomol group appointed Andrei editor of the school newspaper, Nikolai asked to be taken on to the staff too.

"But it's not your line at all," he was told. "Why, your marks for literature are not particularly good. You'd do better to work in the physics circle; that suits you fine."

"You're supposed to assign Comsomol members to the work they want to do," objected Nikolai. "And what I want is to work on the wall newspaper."

He was put on the staff and made himself useful there: he was a good draughtsman and improved the lay-out of the paper.

But Andrei rejected the poems and articles that Nikolai submitted.

"They don't come off," he said, anxious not to offend his friend. "You know what I mean, they just don't come off. The words are there but the feeling and the thought aren't."

"How can that be?" Nikolai asked with alarm. "That means I must have a go at my theory or I'll not get into the philology faculty."

He had decided to go in for philology because that was what Andrei intended to do. It was inconceivable that he should study anywhere except where Andrei was studying.

Nikolai still had two more years at school when Andrei left. Everything was settled; Andrei had registered to take his university entrance exam and was beginning to glory in the name of student when something happened that upset all plans—Andrei's father broke his arm, the fracture turned out to be a serious one, the arm did not mend and Andrei decided that the moment had come when he would have to earn a living.

"Dad's pension plus my stipend don't come to enough," he said. "The university will wait; it's my duty to help my old man when he's ill."

Andrei's father, Boris Ivanovich Korolev, raised no objections; he didn't want the lad to have to count every rouble while he was studying. Let him work. He helped Andrei to get a factory job and was proud that the lad quickly learned to operate a milling machine and started to bring home a quite appreciable contribution to the family budget.

At first Andrei found the factory very much to his liking. Sociable by nature, he quickly found interesting people in the shop and took part in the most varied activities: he wrote articles for the factory paper; he joined the drama circle and even played the role of Chatsky in *Wit Works Woe*; he won a prize in the inter-shop sports contest; he lost his heart to a pretty dark-eyed girl timekeeper.

At home he would tell Nikolai what had happened during the day, and it always seemed to Nikolai that life at the factory was much more

interesting and happy than at school. Nikolai listened with envy; he was ready to leave school at once and go and work with Andrei. He would have done so had his mother not objected.

"Half-educated people are no use anywhere," she said. "No use in the factory either. There are people working who are trying to complete their education by going to evening classes and studying in colleges and technical schools, and here are you imagining that eight years' schooling is enough for you. First you finish school and then you can choose."

Nikolai probably would have entered the same factory and gone to work in the same shop as Andrei when he left school; but Andrei suddenly lost interest in the factory, in his milling machine and even in the dark-eyed girl timekeeper. He turned to writing poetry again, spent his evenings at the editorial office of the Comsomol paper where young poets sometimes gathered, and started talking about the university again.

"I'm not cut out for machinery," he admitted to Nikolai. "I've had enough of standing in front of a milling machine and doing the same thing day in, day out. Why, I'm working almost automatically, without having to think at all. To improve my work, invent something, reckon and calculate—no, not my cup of tea at all."

"But you were so interested in inventors and even wrote an article about them," said Nikolai. "It was a good article, too. Interesting."

"I know I did. But I didn't write about what they invented but how they did it. I'm not interested in machinery itself. I'm interested in it as the expression of man's ability, of his feelings even. Do you understand me? Nothing in the world would make me study machines, lathes, cranes. I'll go to the university as I meant to before. It's settled. Let's apply together."

Nikolai said nothing: he was a bad arguer. But during the previous two years he had grown used to the idea of working in a factory, had read many books about machinery, had dreamed of the day when he would build a complicated, powerful machine with his own hands. He would gladly have followed Andrei into the shop in order to work while studying at a technical college. But he was not willing to follow him to the university.

Nikolai did not go to the university. For the first time in his life he decided his fate for himself and entered a technical college. But though they studied apart, Andrei and Nikolai remained as good friends as ever. Nikolai met no one at college who could, in his opinion, be compared with Andrei. Andrei was his friend for life, a friend to whom he could reveal his inmost thoughts, who understood everything although he had quite different tastes and inclinations himself.

"The unity of opposites," Andrei's father joked about them. Indeed, their natures were quite different. Nikolai remained as indecisive, as timid even, as he was as a child; he lacked self-confidence; he hesitated long where Andrei decided at once. Nikolai did well at his studies but only by dint of stubborn perseverance, while Andrei grasped everything at once. Nikolai was racked with doubts about his knowledge or his ability to apply it. Andrei was always confident that everything he tackled would be successful.

Andrei was certain from the beginning that he would find work to do at the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory.

"How on earth can we send you there? What are you going to do at that place?" one member of the appointments board asked him. "It would be much better for you to go to a town and work on the staff of a large newspaper."

"I can work on the factory newspaper," Andrei said. "I've had some experience of that. I worked on a factory paper for two years."

They shrugged their shoulders. They did not know whether that particular factory needed a newspaper man. They promised to get in touch with the Communist Party organization in the Urals and, with their agreement, to send Andrei to the factory he was so set on going to.

"How long will it take to get a decision?" Andrei enquired.

"Hard to say. . . . Maybe a fortnight, maybe less."

It did not suit Andrei to wait so long. He went to the post-office and pondered long over the text of a telegram which he wanted to be at once brief and convincing. After considerable effort he produced the following:

"Graduated with honours Moscow University. Party member since 1952. Desire work your factory on newspaper. Request your agreement. Andrei Korolev."

He addressed the telegram to the Communist Party organizer at the factory and, feeling quite certain that everything would turn out the way he wanted, went with Nikolai to buy a suitcase and various articles for the journey.

"Wait a bit. You may be wasting your money," said Nikolai as he watched Andrei choosing a rucksack. "You may not go, after all."

"I will," said Andrei confidently. "I've decided, haven't I? Don't forget that confidence spells success. If you want something, you've got to want it very badly; and if you want something badly, you've got to make an effort to get it. I want to go to the Urals and I'm going, you'll see."

Three days later he received a reply to his telegram:

"Come. There's a job for you. Party organizer Stoletov."

2

Nikolai and Andrei were polishing the floor in their rooms when the door-bell rang with a loud and compelling peel that resounded in the hall.

"That can't be a visitor, surely," said Andrei, wiping the sweat off his brow. "Open the door while I do this corner."

Shaking his foot clear of the polishing cloth, Nikolai tore into the hall. Stripped to the waist, with a towel wrapped round his head which he had just washed, he was not altogether prepared to receive visitors, but at this time of morning no one was likely to call except a fellow student. He flung open the door boldly.

Into the hall walked not a fellow student but a middle-aged, heavily-built man in a stylish light overcoat and a panama hat. Not recognizing the caller, Nikolai gaped at him blankly. Then he realized who it was. The colour rushed to his cheeks as he backed into the hat-stand.

"Hello, what's this? Just had a bath?" asked the visitor with a smile. "On your own here? Is your mother at work? Well, let me in, I can only stay a few moments."

Throwing an arm over Nikolai's shoulders, the caller shoved him forward and walked with assurance along the passage. His gestures, his voice, the way he was dressed were as compelling and self-confident as the ring with which he had announced his arrival. Nikolai walked on, vexed with the thought that he must look somewhat odd in his turban, with nothing on but a pair of shorts and his bare feet stained red by the floor polish.

A good thing our room's tidy, he reflected and decided that he would have to drop in on Andrei to put on some clothes.

"Excuse me, I'll be back in a moment," he said gruffly, shaking himself free of the visitor's grip. "Please go into our room."

He hurried into Andrei's room feeling upset, and pulled the door to behind him. Andrei went on waltzing about the room with his foot on the polishing cloth, whistling in time to his movements.

"Who's out there?" he asked. "Bring 'em in. Let them help polish the floor, damn them."

"Shut up," whispered Nikolai. "It's my old man. Where's your ski suit? I'll wear it if you don't mind."

He slipped on the suit, snatched the turban off his head and ran his hands through his hair. For some reason he found it disgusting that his father should catch him looking like this. He would have liked to meet his father wearing a new suit and doing something worth while, reading a serious technical book, for instance.

"Put on some slippers; your feet are as red as a goose's," said Andrei, noticing how upset Nikolai was as he tidied himself up. "Is he going to stay long? Not till the evening, surely? He'll spoil Maria Mikhailovna's mood altogether."

"He said just for a few moments. Join us, please. I don't like being alone with him."

"I'll come as soon as I've dressed. But what on earth are you getting so excited about? Be tough with him, you're as good as he is now. You're an engineer yourself."

"What, d'you think I'm frightened of him?" Nikolai retorted, bridle suddenly. "I just find him disgusting. Walks in as if he owned the place, without being invited. Why, I might not want to see him."

"All right then, treat him like that, so that he knows you don't want to see him."

Zhukov senior really did behave as if he owned the place. He roamed about the room poking unceremoniously into every corner. It was a large light spotlessly clean room. Nikolai and his mother often moved the furniture, trying to make it as cosy and comfortable as possible. Now, they maintained, they had turned the place into a complete apartment. One corner, screened by a sideboard and a wardrobe, was "Mum's bedroom." Here stood a bed covered with a snow-white counterpane, and a bedside table with a small lamp, a book and a photograph of Niko'ai in a round frame. Along another wall was arranged the "drawing-room" furniture—a piano, a rack for music, an easy chair. Near the window was the "study"—book-shelves, a writing desk and the divan bed on which Nikolai slept. A dining-table with four chairs round it and a lamp with a large shade made up the "dining-room."

Nikolai and his mother loved their "apartment." They entertained their friends there and were delighted to hear Maria Zhukova's friends and the students who came to visit them from the hostel say how roomy

and comfortable the place was. Now, however, as he watched his father walk out of his mother's "bedroom" and bump against the table as he stepped into the "drawing-room," Nikolai felt with vexation that the room must seem cramped and poor to his father.

His father had a large flat in one of the new well-arranged houses; he drove in his own car; he owned a cottage in the country. Nikolai knew all that, although neither he nor his mother had ever visited his father's new family.

"You've got this place arranged splendidly," his father said with a note of approval as he sank to the divan in the "study." "Very bright, the way you've fixed the furniture. When did you buy the piano?"

"Mother hires the piano," said Nikolai. "She got it three years ago."

He remained standing, leaning against the sideboard, not looking at his father. He tried to suppress the nervousness that was gaining mastery over him, for he despised himself for it.

"So you and I are colleagues now," his father said, smiling. "I congratulate you most heartily. A friend of mine who teaches at your college told me how well you've done. You have a liking for the exact sciences, I see. Well done. You take after your father."

After his father, indeed! Not at all. His father must have forgotten that his former wife, Nikolai's mother, taught physics and maths at school. If it was true that parents passed on their abilities to their children, then his mother alone was responsible for his success in the exact sciences.

"Mother helped me enormously," said Nikolai, his face paling. In his embarrassment, he held his hands behind his back. "She knows a lot about higher mathematics. . . . She is going to present a thesis for her M. Sc.," he added, watching his father's face.

Nikolai's father had a M. Sc. in engineering. He had studied throughout his youth, and Nikolai's mother had worked to make it possible for him to study undisturbed. Nikolai had been told that by Boris Ivanovich a long time ago when as a schoolboy he had looked down on his mother's profession—a schoolma'am, if you please.

"Your mother could have become a professor," Boris Ivanovich had told Nikolai angrily. "But first she made a professor of your father, and now it's you she's providing with food and clothes and the chance to study. She never took a kopeck from your father, refused alimony when he thrust it at her. The pride of the woman! You dare speak of your mother again like that and you'll know what my belt feels like."

Now, as he told his father how his mother was preparing to present her thesis, Nikolai recalled Boris Ivanovich's words and the look that he cast his father was full of hostility.

"Her thesis, eh?" his father said, his interest aroused. "That's the thing. There's no sense in a woman of her ability wasting herself teaching in a secondary school. Like using a three-hundred-ton press to make hair pins."

The voice was well-intentioned but Nikolai felt that his father was speaking about his mother's work with a lack of respect.

"School children are not hair pins," he said tartly. "And then Mother did not have the means to study. Now I shall try to see that she has."

He felt a strong desire to add something that would hurt his father but could not bring himself to the point: that wretched timidity tied his tongue. Even what he had already said seemed to him unpardonably rude.

But his father apparently had not noticed the rudeness. He went on smiling, his voice carried a gentle note, his every gesture expressed satisfaction that he was sitting there and chatting with his grown-up son.

"Let me see your diploma," Nikolai's father asked, paying no attention to the boy's remark. "I must say it's interesting to have a son who is an engineer."

He questioned Nikolai about his appointment. The factory, he said, was an excellent school for a young engineer but not one in which too much time ought to be spent.

"Work there for a year or two and come back to Moscow. To a scientific research institute or a head office, or to the Ministry. Or you can go in for teaching and go on studying yourself at the same time. When you get to that point, come straight to me. I'll do everything I can for you, and that's a lot." He rose from the divan, walked across to Nikolai and laid his hands on his son's shoulders. "My son's quite a big fellow now," he said and there was tenderness in his voice. "Well, lad, things haven't been as they should have between us but I think we can put that right. I'll try and help you a bit. There's a man I know at that Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory. I'll give you a letter to him and he'll smooth the way for you. . . . And now you'll get something from me for graduating." Turning back to the divan he unclasped a large leather brief-case and drew out of it a white cardboard box. "Here you are," he said, handing the box to Nikolai. "Wear it, don't lose it, and be as accurate in your life as it is."

"Thank you," muttered Nikolai. "But I don't really need a present. . . ."

He turned the box over and over in his hands, not knowing what to do with it, while his father waited with a happy smile on his lips.

"Come on, open it, open it," he said impatiently, jogging Nikolai towards the table. "Bring it over here."

Nikolai laid the box on the table, opened it and saw a beautiful gold wristlet watch. The watch was flat and small with a black dial-plate on which the squat pale-hued figures stood out clearly.

"Like it?" Nikolai's father asked joyfully as he watched his son. "Let me put it on your wrist for you."

"But I've got a watch," said Nikolai, pulling back the sleeve of the ski-jacket. "It's a splendid timekeeper. I've had it over a year."

"That's a watch for a student, a *Pobeda*," said his father, reaching to undo the strap on Nikolai's wrist. "This is one for an engineer, it's a *Moser*, guaranteed accurate to the second."

He adjusted the watch on Nikolai's wrist and gave his hand a friendly tap. Then he caught sight of the ink-stand on the table. Propped up against the bear was the card with its message: "Mother. Thank you for my degree. Your son." Nikolai's eyes crossed his father's; he blushed. Why had Mother left that card out? He didn't at all want this stranger to see the terms they were on.

If his father were to say anything insulting, he'd fling his watch back at him. And what was more, turn him out of the house. No, he would leave himself. . . .

But his father said nothing insulting; on the contrary, he praised Nikolai for being attentive to his mother, and said Nikolai ought to have bought some flowers as well but that he would take care of that omission himself.

"Like to come along with me in the car?" he asked. "It's waiting outside and there's a flower-shop quite close. There's no need to change," he added, his eyes on Nikolai. "You look a real sportsman like that."

He was most reluctant to go with his father but it was difficult to refuse. Nikolai shifted his weight from one foot to the other, not knowing what to do; but at that moment Andrei came to his rescue. Andrei looked as spruce and handsome as an actor in his light grey suit, silk shirt and bright tie, his hair smooth, his face clean-shaven.

"How do you do, Nikolai Mikhailovich," he said brightly. "Don't you recognize me? I'm Andrei Korolev."

"The neighbour's son! Not really!" the other exclaimed as he shook hands with Andrei. "Well, my lad, you've shot up all right. Probably taller than your dad, and he, if I'm not mistaken, is no little 'un."

He sat down again and began to ask Andrei what his college was and where he was going to work. His questions were those of a man who was really interested in the answers; he recalled the times when he lived in that house and when Andrei and Nikolai were still Young Pioneers—one of them somewhat senior, the other quite small.

"Yours is a fine friendship, my boys," he said with a sigh. "I envy you such a friendship. Take care of it, it's worth something."

Recollecting that it was time for him to leave, Nikolai's father picked up his brief-case and removed from his pocket a thick fountain pen.

"Give me an envelope," he said to Nikolai. "I'll write that letter for you while I'm here."

On a page of his writing-pad with the letter-heading of his office on it he scribbled a few lines which he then read aloud:

"Dear Comrade Kovalev,

"This is to recommend to you my son who is starting his career as an engineer. Please be nice to him, keep an eye on him and help him as much as you can. I'll write to you under separate cover about the way the examination of your design is going. It has come back to me now. We are reaching our final decision on it."

He sealed the envelope and addressed it to Arseni Mikhailovich Kovalev, marking it personal.

"Here you are." He handed the letter to Nikolai. "If I am any judge of humanity, he will do his best to help you. Deliver this letter as soon as you arrive. With my regards. . . . Well, I must be off. We shall have to postpone our visit to the florist's together. I've no time. I'll do it another way."

He took his leave of the two young men who accompanied him to the door.

"Come and see me before you leave," he reminded Nikolai. "Remember me to your mother. I'll come to see her myself, though."

"As if she needs to see you," Nikolai mumbled when the door had closed behind his father. "We do not invite you, that's certain."

"What's the good of mumbling like that after he's gone," asked Andrei. "You should have told him that to his face. But d'you know, I like him: he's a cheerful, kind-hearted old chap."

Kind-hearted? Had he been kind-hearted when while away on a business trip he sent his mother a letter saying that his heart "had been set

afame by the torch of a new love"? Had he been kind-hearted when his wife, overwhelmed by the shock, lay ill in hospital? His "kind-heartedness" caused him to forget Nikolai for long years, to overlook his birthdays, his promotions at school. No one, not even Andrei, not even his mother, knew how much Nikolai had longed for a letter from his father on New Year's Day, a greeting for May Day or the anniversary of the October Revolution.

No, he would never forgive his father.

"A kind-hearted old chap," he said gloomily. "To hell with him."

"What's the letter for?"

"Using his influence. What do you think, shall I take it with me or not?"

He asked the question spitefully, certain in advance that Andrei would be indignant. But Andrei said that the letter could be taken: what if suddenly the factory gave him a chilly welcome? An influence might be useful then.

"You can take the letter yourself. I don't intend to make use of any influence of his."

Then he remembered his present. The gold wrist-band felt cold on his skin, the dial-plate flashed below his sleeve.

"A graduation present," he said, showing the watch to Andrei. "Like it?"

"Let's see. It's a beauty. Take it off and let me take a closer look at it. That's a present for you! And you not satisfied with anything. I knew I was right when I said he was a kind-hearted old chap."

Andrei examined the watch with care, admired the luminous hands and figures and the little dial for the second hand. Andrei said that this would help Nikolai very much in his work because he might have to time operations or processes and then he would need to use his father's present.

"I shan't take it with me. Anyway, I'm going to give it to Mother."

"What for? It's a man's watch. Don't be an ass, and stop trying to carry all the troubles of the world on your shoulders: it doesn't go at all with your snub-nose. Go and get dressed. We're expecting visitors and you haven't even got any socks on."

But before the guests arrived, before Nikolai's mother returned from school, a messenger came from the florist's with a huge basket of flowers.

"They are for Maria Mikhailovna Zhukova," said the messenger. "Is she in?"

Then, learning that Maria Mikhailovna was not at home, the messenger handed the basket to Andrei and said:

"Be so kind as to deliver it, young man. And there's a little note in this envelope, too."

Andrei wanted to arrange the flowers on the writing desk but Nikolai objected and stood the basket on the bedside table after removing the books and his photograph from it. There, behind the wardrobe, the basket was not so noticeable.

Now it was really time to dress. Especially as Nina might arrive. The thought that Nina might soon be here caused Nikolai's mood to change at once. His father, his childhood miseries, his sense of injury—

that all belonged to the past. The real thing was Nina, the journey to the Urals, the start of an independent life.

"The day to come, what is it bearing?" he sang out in a wild, cracked voice. "In vain into the darkness staring, I try to glimpse it." Andrei, have you got my razor? I'm coming to tidy up my lovely mug."

And he dashed into the kitchen for some shaving-water.

3

Nikolai's mother took a suitcase out of the store-room with a sigh. The boys would soon be leaving. However often she postponed packing her son's things, that packing had to be done, and, though she tried not to think of it, the moment of parting drew nearer. Maria Mikhailovna could not imagine how she was going to live on her own. The room would feel empty, there would be nobody to look after. . . .

"Don't take on so, neighbour," Andrei's father consoled her. He had noticed how red and swollen were Maria Mikhailovna's eyes. "We're not sending our sons off to war, it's not for ever."

But his flippancy belied his own feelings.

"Verkhnyaya Kamenka Machine Works," he said, eyeing sceptically his son's papers. "Never heard of the place. I've heard of the Urals Machine Works, they're famous. And I've heard of Magnitogorsk; who hasn't? Chelyabinsk Tractor Works, too. They're magnificent factories. But you've not been lucky enough to get to one of those places, lads."

These words made no impression on Andrei. Nikolai, however, looked thoughtful. One day he said to Andrei:

"D'you know, I went today to the college reading-room and looked through all the newspapers for the past month. I didn't find a word about Verkhnyaya Kamenka. Drew a complete blank, except that in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* I found a short item about work in the hostels for young workers being below par. Perhaps your father's right."

Andrei was not so easily put out of countenance.

"Don't be such a funk, Zhukov. It's up to you now to see the place gets a better press."

He started packing the books he had decided to take with him.

"Why are you taking so many? You'll need another suitcase for them," Nikolai complained.

"Another? Two more, you mean. But don't worry. I'll put the books in the luggage van."

So the packing went on, with their parents helping as best they could. Maria Mikhailovna looked through the linen, sewed on buttons and put marks on the handkerchiefs. She packed everything that she thought they would need to set themselves up; thermos flasks, glasses, plates and cutlery, a new table-cloth.

She still saw Nikolai and Andrei as boys who were not capable of organizing their daily lives for themselves. She secretly pictured to herself "her boys" with holes in their socks, rumpled shirts and grubby handkerchiefs. Who was going to see that everything was washed and mended? Who would see that Nikolai did not forget to take his bath regularly and that Andrei ate a good breakfast of a morning and did not go off to work on an empty stomach? In Moscow that was her job, but there. . . . As

she sat over the open suitcase she even considered asking to be transferred to a post in Verkhnyaya Kamenka. But how could she break with a school where she had worked for almost a quarter of a century?

Maria Mikhailovna worried and dithered; but for Andrei's father she would have been at a loss what to do.

"That's all quite unimportant, my dear woman," said Boris Ivanovich when he saw the pile of things she had got ready for packing. "They don't need those plates or the holders for the tea glasses. They don't need us to look after them either. They're starting out in life on their own, and they are starting the right way. I'm sure of that. They are good lads and no fools. They've absolutely no further need of our guidance."

The small china tea-pot that Maria Mikhailovna was holding slipped out of her hands and broke. She laughed sadly and picked up the pieces.

"That tea-pot wasn't fated to go to the Urals, I can see. Perhaps you're right, I'll have to re-pack."

Together they re-sorted their sons' things and relieved the overfull suitcase of some of its contents. But even what was left was too much for the boys. They filled the case up again with books, laying their clothes in thin layers between them.

That evening, with the packing still undone, Maria Mikhailovna went into the kitchen to make tea and Boris Ivanovich sat smoking at the open window. A dark sky spread over Moscow, the street noises died down, the lights in the windows went out one by one.

"You haven't got much longer in Moscow," said Andrei's father, "so have a good last look at it."

From the window nothing could be seen except the street lights, the sparks from the tram-car overhead wires, and the faint remote stars in the dark sky. But Andrei and Nikolai, standing beside each other, saw everything that the darkness hid: the old mansion opposite—which they referred to as "Tolstoyan"—the outline of the new skyscraper in the distance, the tops of the trees in the boulevard near by. They had known this nearer view since they were children, had grown accustomed to it from the earliest days of their lives; and now they had to say good-bye to this beloved view.

Maria Mikhailovna entered the room quietly and placed a tea-pot and a tray of tea-things on the table. She steadied the rattling glasses with her hand, for she felt the silence in the room to be too significant to disturb.

Nikolai turned and beckoned his mother to the window. She sat on the window-sill, carefully folded back the lace curtain and drew her son to her. Nikolai laid an arm over her shoulders, and felt her tremble at his gentle touch. Andrei was leaning with his elbows on the back of the chair where his father sat. All four of them gazed silently out of the open window as if something miraculous were happening outside.

But there was no miracle—just the sigh of a warm breeze, someone hurrying across the courtyard, whistling a gay little tune, and from the street the honk of a passing car and the tinkle of tram-car bells. From afar the wind bore the faint chimes of the Kremlin clock.

"It's good thing there's radio," said Andrei, bending his head towards his father. "We'll tune in to Moscow there in the Urals and hear the chimes and picture Red Square in a flash. Moscow will seem near."

"Moscow's not far from the Urals, wireless or not," said Boris Ivano-

vich. He could feel his son's chin nuzzling against his head. "Get in a plane and you can be home in no time. I've never been to the Urals, I'm a Moscovite, a stay-at-home. But I don't think of the Urals as far away."

"Will you come and see me during your holidays?" asked Andrei, nudging his father's head with his chin. "I bet you don't."

"They're sending me to Kislovodsk. I ought to 'take the waters,' they say. So I shan't be able to come and see you."

"What about you, Mum? Will you come?" asked Nikolai.

"I will," replied Maria Mikhailovna firmly. "I'll certainly come."

"Don't you go," said Boris Ivanovich. "Let them live on their own and find their bearings. I thought you were intending to go and stay with your sister on the Volga. Go there. You need to rest, not to keep house for two young men. Let them settle down and spread their wings. And you and I shall watch and see what kind of wings they've got, eagles' or midges'."

He raised his head, looked at Andrei, lighted another cigarette and went on:

"You've received a lot from the state, my lads. Now it's up to you to repay your debt. If you don't, you're not worth a kopeck. You'd better keep out of my way in that case."

As Andrei listened to his father's words, he reflected how hard it was going to be for him to be left on his own. As for Maria Mikhailovna, she would miss Nikolai terribly. But both she and his father were bearing up wonderfully. . . .

"Do you hear what Boris Ivanovich is saying?" Maria Mikhailovna asked her son.

She pressed her cheek against his hand which lay over her shoulder. But Nikolai did not notice: he started telling how well those graduates from the college who had left the year before for factories in the Urals and Siberia were doing.

"They're no midges. They are all foremen or in charge of shops or sections. One of them has even been appointed chief engineer at a small factory. And what about those who stayed in Moscow or went to work in Leningrad or in other big centres? They didn't get any independence at all. There are plenty of experienced men here."

"Don't mean to tell me you're thinking of becoming a chief engineer?" asked Andrei.

"There's no harm in thinking about it," retorted Nikolai. "Aren't you thinking of becoming a famous poet?"

They started arguing the way they did when they were schoolboys. Boris Ivanovich silently stared at the windows in the house opposite. The light went out in one of them; in another a faint greenish light replaced the bright glare. The sparks from the tram-car wires died in the night, silence and coolness rose from the boulevard, footsteps in the street became rarer and rarer.

"There's just one thing I want to say to you, lads," Boris Ivanovich said. "Always be true to your people. Think above all of how you can work for the good of your people. Measure every step you take with that rule—whether it's good for the people, for the state. You'll not go wrong then, believe me."

"What are you telling us that for, Boris Ivanovich?" asked Nikolai. "We know that, don't we?"

"Yes, you know it, you know it," replied Boris Ivanovich with a chuckle. "But I'm old-fashioned. I haven't forgotten my proverbs, and there's a proverb that runs: 'Repetition is the mother of knowledge.'"

He rose to his feet and switched on the light. A dazzlingly bright lamp shone over the table. It revealed the meat-pie that Maria Mikhailovna had found time to bake for supper.

They all sat round the table.

"To your good health, lads, to your work. Make Maria Mikhailovna and me feel proud of you," said Boris Ivanovich. "Make your colleges and your comrades be proud of you."

They sat round the table for a long time. And when the supper things had been cleared away, they spread a map of the Urals on the cloth and searched hard for Verkhnyaya Kamenka. They found it on the banks of a large lake out of which flowed the river Kamenka, a mere hair's breadth on the map. The lake was ringed with mountains; Andrei who had read a few books about the Urals announced that the name of the river and the factory indicated that the region was mountainous because in the Urals the word *kamen* meant mountain.

"Kamen.¹ That's very fitting and poetical," he said. "I like that very much: 'Denezhkin Kamen,' 'Zolotoi Kamen,' 'Yermak Kamen' . . . Oh, the mountains, the mountains. Do you remember that passage in *Cossacks*, Nikolai?"

"No, I don't," said Nikolai. "I remember Lukashka but not the mountains."

"Lukashka! And do you mean to say you don't remember that bit about the way Olenin was struck by the mountains? How the beauty of the mountains was described as 'stern and stately'? About the inner, solemn voice which kept reminding him: 'And the mountains'? I remember it all right."

He screwed up his eyes and slowly, word for word, repeated the text of Tolstoy's story of the Caucasus:

"Beyond the Terek rises the smoke from a Tartar village . . . and the mountains! The sun has risen and glitters on the Terek now visible beyond the reeds . . . and the mountains! From the village comes a Tartar wagon, and women, beautiful young women, pass by . . . and the mountains!"

"I remember it: I reread it all this morning. . . . And you've never looked at it again. You and your Lukashka!"

Boris Ivanovich looked at his son with a smile. What an eagle Koro-lev the fitter had reared! Of course, he still had a lot of idle thoughts in his head, all sorts of dreams, but they were the right sort of dreams, ones which he thoroughly approved of. All the same, he did not give voice to his approval, only frowned and said:

"Mountains are all right in their place but it's high time we went to bed. Maria Mikhailovna and I will have to be off to work soon."

Indeed, the night was over and the electric light was burning quite needlessly: the room had been full of daylight for a long time.

"Do you feel like sleeping, Nikolai?" Andrei asked. "I don't. Let's go out for a walk."

They left the house. The clang of the closing gate sounded hollow in the early morning silence of the street. The trams had not yet started to

¹ In Russian, "*kamen*" means "stone."

run; there were no trains rumbling deep under ground; the cranes, glinting in the dawn light, hung motionless over the high frameworks of new buildings.

There had been a shower during the night, and the morning was fresh and cool. The damp, rain-washed pavements, the trees with their leaves still dripping, the stillness of the deserted streets—all this was solemn and beautiful. The two friends walked side by side, saying nothing to each other but letting their eyes rest on the same things. The school they both went to. The building where the Comsomol district committee had its offices; that was where both of them had received their Comsomol membership cards. The stop where they used to take the tram to the Bolshoi Theatre, to the Art Theatre, into the centre of the city.

In the evenings there were always people at that tram stop, but now no one was waiting. An elderly woman with a sleepy, toil-worn face was cleaning the points.

"Good morning," Andrei said to her and raised his new hat.

The woman looked at him in silence, ignored his greeting and went on working. Not that Andrei minded: he was carried away by the unusualness of everything and had greeted the woman for no other reason than to break the silence.

"We're leaving Moscow," said Nikolai. "Surely you must feel sad about that."

"I do, a bit," Andrei conceded. "But it's not for ever, is it? We'll come here, we'll write, we'll talk over the phone. Perhaps *Pravda* will print an article of mine. Perhaps my poems will be published here. Wherever I am or whatever I'm doing, Moscow will be at my side. Where are we going? To the Red Square?"

Nikolai nodded and on they walked, shoulder to shoulder, keeping in step as though they were marching in a demonstration. A delicate film of mist hung over the square. The flowers in the borders behind the Mausoleum emitted a fragrant scent. The clock flung its chimes to the pale blue sky.

"Listen," said Andrei, snatching off his hat. "Listen to that."

Unconsciously, Nikolai too bared his head and listened, thinking that the time was close at hand when he would hear the Kremlin chimes only over the wireless, only at midnight. Then he realized that in the Urals there was a two-hour difference in time and that it would be two o'clock in the morning when he heard the midnight chimes through his dreams.

He wanted to mention it to Andrei but, glancing at him, kept silent. Andrei stood with a pensive, dreamy look on his face, plunged in some reflection and Nikolai did not want to disturb him. Perhaps he was composing a poem.

But Andrei was not composing poetry. He was simply listening to the chimes of the clock and delighting in their clear high ring. There was not a thought in his mind. The early morning was so lovely, the air so fresh, a pigeon cooed in the cornice overhead and a girl who was walking by looked at him and smiled. . . .

The chimes ceased and a solemn silence reigned over the square, broken only by the distant steps of the hurrying girl and the hum of an approaching watering-car which was flinging broad jets of water to either side.

"It's marvellous," said Andrei and put on his hat.

They recalled the demonstrations in which they had walked together, the times they had seen Stalin.

"The first time I saw him was before I started going to school," said Nikolai. "It was the Seventh of November and beginning to rain. Stalin stood there with his head uncovered. Before that I marched in a May Day demonstration but I didn't see him that time. . . . It's a strange thing, but now I don't feel that he is dead. For all the time that I can remember in my life he was there. And then suddenly his name appeared on the front of the Mausoleum. . . ."

Andrei stood looking grave and solemn, gazing somewhere above the Mausoleum, at the parapet of the Kremlin walls, at the sky where an aeroplane flew leaving a thin white trail behind it.

"I hate death," he said abruptly, his eyes on the plane. "I despise it. I deny it. You say that all the time you can remember, he was there. But isn't it true that Lenin was there all the time we can remember? It is, though his name went up on the Mausoleum long before either of us was born. There is no such thing as death, Nikolai. All you have to do is to live in such a way that death is powerless to destroy you."

"Of course death is powerless to destroy Lenin or Stalin," said Nikolai. "Or any other genius like Pushkin, for instance. Or Mendeleyev or Tolstoy. But whether you deny death or not, it exists. Millions of people have perished without leaving a trace and no one ever remembers them."

Nikolai sounded offended; Andrei suddenly flared up.

"No one disappears without a trace," he said, looking away from the plane. "For instance, I don't believe I shall. I don't expect to be remembered like Pushkin but I'm living in an age when to leave nothing behind you in life means you are completely worthless."

He spoke hotly, passionately. Then he smote Nikolai hard on the back and said:

"Cheer up, old man. We've got another hundred years to live. But we've only another hour to walk. Let's go on."

They walked to the Lenin Library and stopped on its broad steps, two young men in identical new hats, in their best suits, tall, well-built and each in his own way, attractive. Andrei had black hair and dark eyes, his brow was broad and bold, his mouth well defined and slightly haughty. He held his head thrown back a little and his shoulders lay in such a way that his powerful young neck was thrust forward. Young men like him put one in mind of an eagle.

That could not be said of Nikolai. With his light-hued eyes, his silky, fair hair, his figure which though strong still had the narrow shoulders of youth, he was of a retiring disposition and was less noticeable than his dashing friend.

"I'm an ass, Kolya," Andrei said suddenly. "I must be off to the works. I've an appointment with an editor. You go on alone, I'll leave you."

He left with his quick, energetic stride, completely absorbed in the impending appointment. Nikolai watched him go on his way and noticed how two girls who were climbing the steps of the library turned round and looked after Andrei.

He decided that it was time for him to be off, too. He would walk to the clinic to see Nina.

Nikolai had had the thought of saying good-bye to Nina on his mind all night.

How terribly difficult and complicated his relations with Nina were: he liked her enormously, he was in love with her, but he could not muster his courage to tell her about it. Did Nina share his feelings? She was different each time he met her; her moods changed so swiftly that he was unable to place any real confidence in them.

It was at a New Year party at the university that he first met Nina.

At first he did not get a very clear picture of her features: round, rosy-cheeked face, full lips and eyes whose look was at once gay and exacting. She came up to him with Andrei and said decisively: "Your friend tells me that you don't like dancing. That's impossible. Come and dance with me."

Nikolai took fright and wanted to avoid this exacting young woman but she grasped his arm firmly and together they joined the broad stream of dancers. Then she said she felt thirsty and bought herself a bottle of lemonade at the buffet. And then she said the room was stuffy and went with Nikolai for a stroll on Manezhnaya Square. When the party was over, she thrust her cloak-room tag into his hand and when he had brought her coat, let him walk her home.

A few days later they met on the skating-rink.

"Look, there's your medico friend skating over there." Andrei had said. "Let's go that way."

Nikolai felt embarrassed but at the same time delighted by Andrei's "your": Nina had appealed to him from the moment they met but, as far as he could remember, he had not breathed a word of that to Andrei. In fact, Andrei had guessed it for himself and had decided to help his shy young friend. He found out that Nina spent her evenings at the skating-rink so he dragged Nikolai along there. He gave Nikolai a ticket for the theatre, telling him that it was a spare one because he was joining a group that was going over the new university building. Nikolai went to the theatre and found Nina sitting in the next seat. Later, Nina called on Andrei with a friend to borrow a book. And after that Andrei declared: "Now it's up to you to take the initiative. From what I know she doesn't dislike you."

But Nikolai was still uncertain whether Nina disliked him or not. They met frequently, they went for walks together through Moscow, they went to the cinema. Nikolai met Nina's parents and Nina paid several visits to his place; Maria Mikhailovna liked her.

"You ought to learn to be more resolute, like Nina," Nikolai's mother told him. "She's a girl who knows what she wants to attain in life and who is going to attain it, that's clear at once. That's a man's trait, while you, if you don't mind my saying so, have a bit of girlishness in your nature."

Nikolai tried to be more resolute but nothing came of it. How could he speak decisively to Nina when each meeting found her even more changeable? One time she would read poetry in a sad, dreamy voice or hum some melancholy tune, another time she would be caustic and mocking, with a sting in every remark. Sometimes she would affectionately call him Nikolushka but when he plucked up courage and was on the point of revealing his true feelings for her she would flare up about nothing

in particular, compare him with other young men and prove to him that while they were real people he was a spineless sort of fellow.

And now he was going away, leaving their relations still vague. He might lose Nina for ever, he might never find out whether she liked him, and Nina, too, would probably never guess that he was harbouring an undeclared love.

So thinking, Nikolai walked to the clinic where Nina worked; he was still uncertain whether he would bring himself to tell her all at their farewell meeting. All he hoped for was that Nina would not be in that prickly, teasing mood that sometimes possessed her for no reason at all.

But when after a long ordeal of waiting Nikolai succeeded in getting Nina into the reception-room, she ran up to him with that very look on her face that he specially feared. She stood before him clad in a white smock with a little white cap miraculously balanced on her luxuriant hair and, hands dug into her pockets, looked at him with a cool, aloof expression.

"You look at me as if I were some malingerer who you were going to give hell to," Nikolai said in an effort to conceal how upset he felt. "But I'm really in pain, you know, you ought to be sorry for me."

"It's easy to see what's wrong with you," Nina replied mockingly, throwing him a quick searching look. "You're planning to enjoy yourself all day and evening. But I've still to finish my education. I haven't time to fool about having a good time."

"Aren't you coming to see us off?" Nikolai asked, twirling his new hat behind his back. "You can't miss that."

"I certainly can," said Nina, rocking on her high-heeled shoes. "No. I'm not coming."

"That means we shan't see each other again," muttered Nikolai. "I'm leaving tomorrow."

At that moment a tremor passed over Nina's face. Her expression changed, her eyes grew big with alarm, she took her hands out of her pockets and clutched them to her breast as if protecting herself against something.

"Tomorrow! What do you mean?" she asked him softly. "Are you going away for good?"

"Yes, for good. With Andrei. I told you about it."

"You told me it was settled in principle but. . . . Somehow I'd the idea that you would be here all summer. Does that mean we shan't be able to spend our holidays together?"

Nikolai had never seen Nina look that way before. He had never heard her speak in such tones—with so much concern and alarm and lack of reticence. There were tears in her eyes, her lips trembled, she looked as though she might start crying in front of everybody.

They stood in the middle of the reception-room. They did not hear the woman weeping on the sofa or the doctor trying to console her. They heard nothing, saw nothing. They stood face to face quite outside the world of physical pain and unconsolable grief. Their grief was far from unconsolable. If it could be called grief at all.

"I'll ask for the day off," Nina said suddenly. "All day and the evening too. Wait here, I'll come back in a few minutes."

She hurried away, leaving Nikolai alone in the reception-room. He

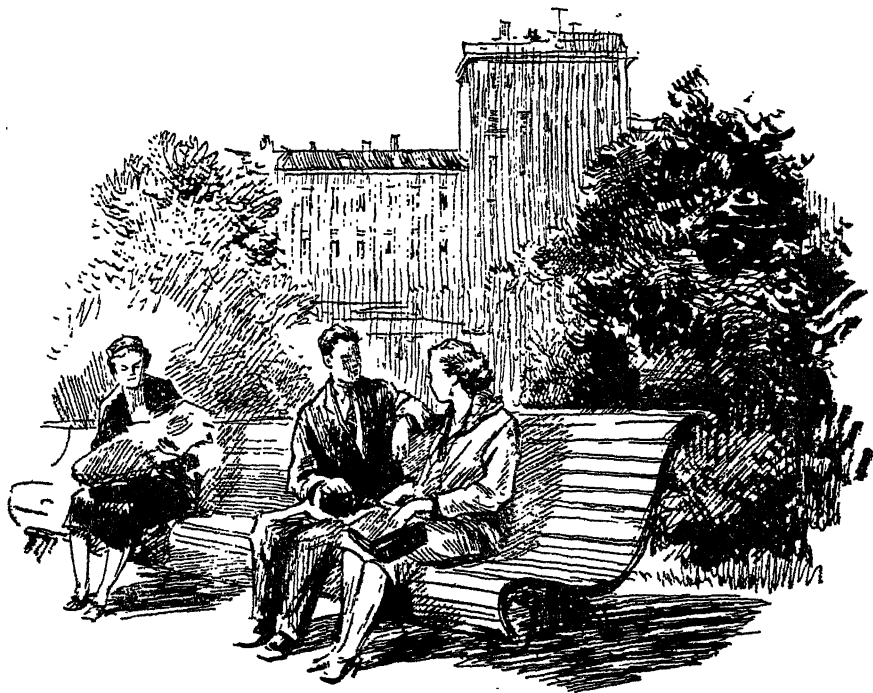
was stupefied, both happy and bewildered at once. He felt that the most significant moment in his life was at hand. If only he could summon the courage to utter those vitally important tender words that he had repeated to himself so often.

When Nina returned, she had discarded her smock and wore a light grey costume with a wisp of a voile kerchief at her throat. When they went into the street and the sun struck them from behind the leafy bough of a tree, Nikolai noticed that her uncovered hair glinted auburn. Nina walked at his side swinging a small attaché case, in which, Nikolai knew, were her smock, cap and books.

Nikolai took Nina's arm and drew her delicate little elbow to his side. It lay so obediently within his folded hand and gave him such a blessed, sweet feeling.

They walked about the streets for a long time in complete silence; it was as if everything had been said between them, as if the sense of touch had replaced all words. When they reached the boulevards, they found a bench to sit on. Nikolai did not release her even then: instead of holding her elbow he seized her small warm fingers and squeezed them.

He gazed longingly at the tiny freckles which he could just see on her olive-complexioned skin, at her rosy mouth where her white teeth glistened moistly. He longed to kiss her without any more ado, but that was out of the question because beside them on the bench sat a woman with a baby in her arms and there were people passing by all the time. And, strangely enough, he felt both vexed at the woman's presence and, at the same time, glad of the excuse she gave him. Once when dancing with Nina he had pressed his lips delicately to her warm fragrant cheek, but Nina had drawn away from him at once and said:



"What are you whispering? I didn't catch it."

She could not have thought he was whispering anything. She did not want to notice his kiss, that was all.

And now, sitting beside Nina on this bench, he went on caressing her fingers and gazing at her lips in silence. Nina too said nothing; but she did not remove her hand. On the contrary, she even gave his fingers a gentle squeeze as if she was afraid he was going to withdraw them.

"Ninotchka," Nikolai whispered feelingly. "Will you write to me?"

Nina nodded and went on squeezing his hand. Her face looked grave as she stared vacantly ahead. She expected Nikolai to say something more and this he noticed.

"I'll write to you often," Nikolai continued, bending to her shoulder. "I've bought two packets of envelopes specially for my letters to you."

"Two packets?" asked Nina and cast a strange look at Nikolai as if she were returning from a reverie that had taken her far away. "How long do you intend to go on writing to me?"

"As long as you like. Ten years," said Nikolai ardently. "If you reply, that is."

"Ten years?"

The fingers that had just been so tender and soft were suddenly withdrawn from Nikolai's hand.

"Separation is a dangerous thing," she said. "I don't know whether I'll have the patience for such a long correspondence."

"For love separation is like wind to a fire," said Nikolai in confusion. "The small ones get blown out, the big ones flame up. I didn't make that up, Ninotchka, I read it somewhere."

"In your grandmother's album, I expect," Nina snapped. "In those days all kinds of endurance tests were in fashion."

She had apparently not noticed the word "love" that had cost him so much effort to pronounce. She had not noticed it as she had not wanted to notice his kiss that time. Playing with the lock of her attaché case, she started to tell him about her own grandmother who boasted that she had withstood the endurance test not only of time but of distance.

"As a girl Granny lived in Siberia. Her betrothed was called up into the navy and sent to Sevastopol. She waited and waited for him. Not for ten years, true, but for three, and then off she went to join him. She hadn't any money so she went on foot. She walked a long, long way, for a whole year. There was a touching reunion in Sevastopol, followed by a wedding. It makes Granny cry even today when she recalls all that. . . . As for me I wouldn't have walked all the way to Sevastopol or waited so long."

Nikolai sat hunched up, hugging his knees. He was thinking that today he was not going to be able to talk to Nina about the most important thing. He had let the opportunity pass, he had ruined everything and the words which he had so often repeated in his own mind would again be left unsaid.

But Nina went on talking as if she had not noticed how Nikolai's expression had changed. She was telling him now about one of her fellow-students who planned to go to Chukotka after graduating and was talking everybody else into going there with him.

"So you've decided to go to Chukotka?" Nikolai asked with alarm.

"I haven't decided anything yet."

Her tone suggested that she expected nothing more from her talk with Nikolai.

"I'm hungry," she said. "I haven't had a bite of anything since last night. Let's go and buy something."

They got up from the bench and Nikolai trailed along obediently after her. In the shop she chose with a businesslike air a bunch of radishes, some spring onions and a few other things.

"Come and have lunch with us," she said. "You've no idea what a wonderful salad Granny will make out of all these things. You'll have a chance of talking to her about the way she stood the endurance test and how separation fans the fire of love."

"No, thanks," said Nikolai. "You might have stayed with me a bit longer."

"I'm tired of walking," Nina said firmly. "I'll come out with you this evening, if you like."

"But we've got people coming in this evening. You must come, definitely. It's our farewell party."

"I think I've got to be at the Conservatoire tonight," said Nina, wrinkling her brow. "Yes, it's today. I've a subscription ticket."

She walked on, swinging her attaché case, Nikolai was ready to burst into tears, for now he realized that there could be no question of any conclusive conversation. He tried to talk her out of going to the Conservatoire; at least she should drop in at the party late if she did not want to miss the concert.

"I'll come, maybe," Nina said in an offhand way, looking to see whether her tram was coming. "But don't wait for me. . . ."

The tram arrived; Nina jumped on to the platform. Nikolai watched her go with a crestfallen look. He saw her reach the door to enter the tram, begin to open it, then suddenly change her mind, and bumping against a man in uniform who had got on after her, lean over the side. The attaché case, from which a sprig of onion tops stuck out, dangled in her hand, the sun kindled sparks in her auburn hair, and in a flash her face again expressed concern and alarm as it had done in the reception-room. She sought Nikolai, caught sight of him among the people on the pavement, smiled and called:

"I'll come, Nikolushka. You can count on it."

Chapter Two

1

Stepan Demyanovich Stoletov arrived at Verkhnyaya Kamenka in early spring. He was sent there by the Central Committee of the Communist Party to organize political work at the factory. The Verkhnyaya Kamenka Machine Works was still very young, not altogether completed and with a rather small working staff.

"It'll be up to you to knock a collective together and bring people up to the mark," he was told. "It's a place with a future. It's got a complex programme and plenty of work ahead of it. Difficult work at that."

This warning did not frighten Stoletov but it made him feel somewhat anxious. Till then he had never undertaken political work on his

own except during the war, at the front. But the war was another matter: in peace time he had worked as a designing-engineer at a leading factory where he was a member of the Communist Party committee and was more involved in questions of technical progress than in strictly political matters.

He pointed out that he would run into difficulties as a political organizer: he had no experience, he lacked the necessary tact, he was impatient and quick-tempered and that would not do when you had a large collective to work with. He had not enough theoretical knowledge. His objections, however, were over-ruled by a single document—a reference in his record. The reference had been written by the military command, and it said that as commissar, and later as assistant-commander for political affairs, Stoletov, in addition to showing great personal bravery, had proved himself to be a splendid organizer, knew how to sustain a high morale in the division and was held in affection and respect by all its members.

"But that was at the front," said Stoletov when confronted with the document. "This is a peace-time job."

"Well, tackle the peace-time job the way you did your work at the front. As for experience, that's something that can be acquired."

With his appointment to Verkhnyaya Kamenka, Stoletov's life took a sharp turn. It meant breaking with the work he knew well and was fond of, with the factory he knew inside out, and with the town where he had lived many years. It meant parting with his family, too, for his wife Varya was unwilling to drop her work and go with her husband to a factory community where there was nothing for her to do.

Stoletov, consequently, felt disappointed and upset as, cursing the flattering words his front companions had written about him, he left for Verkhnyaya Kamenka alone. He went there with reluctance, prejudiced against the new job and against the people he would have to meet in it.

He was morose and on his guard when he went to the first meeting at which a new Communist Party bureau was to be elected. He went up on to the platform to give the meeting some details about himself—a somewhat short, thick-set man with a mass of stiff black hair, keen dark eyes and a mouth with hard lines at the corners.

"I was born in 1910," he began. "Joined the Party in '32. I have higher education and am a mechanical engineer by profession. I've never had any Party reprimands."

Pausing a moment, as if considering what was important in his life story, he added:

"During the war I did political work in the army."

That was all. He remained on the platform waiting for questions. He looked calm but, in fact, he felt ill at ease as he stared hard at the roomful of unknown faces below him. He saw them only vaguely: his excitement blurred his vision—that and the idea that all those people sitting before him were staring back and weighing him up themselves.

"Has anybody any questions to ask?" the chairman said.

Several hands shot up; someone, without asking to be given the floor, called:

"He ought to tell us more about himself. Who are his parents? Where do they live? What do they do?"

"Before the Revolution my father worked in Zorin's gold-fields," said Stoletov, looking towards the corner from where the questions had come. "Now he is a collective farmer, a stable-man. My mother is also a member of the kolkhoz—she runs the dairy farm."

He said no more, feeling that he had exhausted the subject. But from the front row a bespectacled man who had all the time been scribbling in a notebook raised his hand.

"Yes, Comrade Chumov," the chairman said grudgingly. "You have the floor."

Chumov rose and walked slowly to the platform. He was a small man, stout and short-legged. Climbing on to the platform and standing beside Stoletov, he laid down his notebook, cleared his throat and said:

"I find Comrade Stoletov's answers unsatisfactory. I would like to hear some more details about his life. Let him tell us about it from the first year he started to work. I want to hear about himself, about his closest relatives, about his hesitations, his deviations from the general line of the Party—if there were any, of course," he added.

Ah, thought Stoletov, here it comes, for he sensed a note of unfriendly suspicion in the speaker's voice. So this was the way the new collective was greeting him.

"But the secretary of the regional committee has reported to us on Comrade Stoletov's working life, hasn't he?" said the chairman, wincing as if he had toothache. "And his references have been read. What's the point of repeating them and wasting the time of the meeting?"

"There's no hurry," replied Chumov, adjusting his spectacles with a dignified air. "The collective has the right to know everything there is to know about a comrade who is being put up for responsible political work."

There was nothing objectionable in what Chumov said except the way he said it. With a shrug the chairman told Stoletov to reply, but briefly.

"I'll be brief," replied Stoletov, his eyes following Chumov who was leaving the platform. "I'll try not to keep you long. . . . My working life began in nineteen twenty-five. I was fifteen then," he said, advancing to the very edge of the platform. "That was at Sharya, on the Northern railway. I started work as a fitter in the locomotive sheds. I wasn't a fitter at the very beginning, of course. I did all kinds of odd jobs: washed the locomotives, kept the lines clean and did everything I was told to. I'd been to village school for four years before that. . . ."

For a moment he wondered whether to tell them that he had gone to Sharya because his uncle lived there—his father's elder brother. His uncle worked on the railway; he was a conductor on long-distance trains and was considered to be "a man of means." Stoletov's father hoped that young Stepan would learn the ropes from his uncle. There was nothing to be learned at home: the gold-field had closed, the family barely eked out an existence. "We're done for," Stepan's mother said. "Let him join his uncle. He's well-off; looking after our Stepan won't ruin him."

It didn't. Uncle sent him straight into the locomotive sheds and at top speed out of his own home: you be off to the hostel, my pet, we don't need your company to keep us warm.

"I found myself straight away in a large workers' collective," Stoletov continued, not mentioning his uncle or how hurt he had felt at his behaviour. "Actually, it was not so very large but you must take into

account that I had gone there from the wilds, from what used to be a gold-field, and that our village used to be called Tyomnaya.¹"

"Tyomnaya," somebody interjected in a joyful bass. "Why, I'm from near there myself."

A tall stout man in a homespun blouse smiled at Stoletov from the second row. He did not rise to his feet or ask for the floor; he might have been not at a meeting but at a table in the company of friends.

"Tyomnaya," he said. "Now it's been renamed Svetlaya.² That was after the district got electricity. It was a poor, ramshackle village no better than ours. Ours was called Nepryakhino³ because most of the women there worked in the gold-field and couldn't spin or weave or work on the land."

He guffawed and was going to say something else but the chairman tapped the water-jug angrily with his pencil. The stout man fell silent; but his words had established a link between Stoletov and the hall: why, a new man had come and found someone from his own district among those present!

Stoletov sensed this link and with greater freedom continued to tell how at first he had worked for over a year as a building worker—a new water-tower was being built at the railway station at that time—how he had dug earth and carried bricks and then got a job at a bench and learned a real trade.

"When I was seventeen I joined the Comsomol," he went on. "And I ought to say that everything I have now, education, an engineer's diploma, the high title of Party member and much else, too, I owe to the Lenin Comsomol."

A pretty young woman who sat next to the stout man in the homespun blouse looked at her neighbour proudly. Did you hear that? her eyes asked. The way the new Party organizer praised the Comsomol? Not everybody in this room understands the strength of the Comsomol. Just you try now to wave aside the Comsomol members and their requests as has happened sometimes in the past. Oh yes, the new Party organizer is definitely the right sort.

"Putting on airs, eh?" her neighbour whispered in her ear. "Better not, Lyuba dear; the Comsomol was probably better run at that place than it is here."

The girl made a gesture of impatience: Stoletov was describing how he had longed to study, how he had dreamed of becoming an engineer, and how those dreams seemed likely to remain unfulfilled.

"There was I, a half-literate lad, daring to aim at higher education. What was I to do? Go back to school. Not I. I'd grown up, I wasn't going to sit with the little fellows behind a desk again. I decided to learn on my own. But that's not an easy matter, you know, and I don't suppose anything would have come of it if the secretary of our Comsomol organization had not taken an interest in me. . . ."

The Comsomol, his youth, the years of study, of work, of war. . . . Could one really describe all that and was there any need to do it? Stoletov

¹ From tyomny—dark, obscure.

² From svetly—light.

³ From nepryakha—non-spinner

spoke tersely; he was calm and collected in his manner; but he felt relieved when he concluded.

"That's all there is to say about my working life."

The room was quiet. The chairman was on his feet, about to tell Stoletov to step down, but Chumov raised his hand. There was a worried frown on his face.

"I have a question to ask," he said. "Will Comrade Stoletov please tell us who of his relatives have been deprived of their civic rights."

"None of them," replied Stoletov.

"One more question," said Chumov promptly. "Comrade Stoletov still hasn't told us anything about any of his hesitations and deviations from the general line of the Party. I asked him to do that before."

"And I've got nothing to say on the subject," said Stoletov angrily. "I've never had any hesitations; I've never deviated from the Party line."

"Then let me ask this," shouted Chumov, but the hubbub and cries that came from all sides drowned his voice.

"Shut him up."

"That's enough of Chumov."

"Get on with the business, Chairman."

The chairman tapped his pencil against the water-jug and beckoned Stoletov to the chair beside him. But Stoletov left the platform and sat in the front row. He knew that there would be no more questions now. The meeting went on to discuss the candidates for election to the bureau. Stoletov listened while people spoke about him and the other candidates; he sensed the way hands were raised behind him when the chairman asked whether Stoletov's name was to be left on the list of candidates. After that there was an interval. The tellers sealed the voting urn. In an adjacent room typewriters rattled: lists were being drawn up for the secret ballot. Stoletov followed everybody into the broad corridor which was already hazy with cigarette smoke, and stood a little apart from the rest, watching people pass to and fro.

The passers-by looked at him curiously and walked on, chatting among themselves. It was not easy to meet their eyes but Stoletov did not look away or try to avoid their glances. He stood, leaning against the window jamb, smoking and looking hard into the faces of the Communists as they passed him. He felt himself to be in the grip of strong emotions, he longed to see but one familiar face; but his manner betrayed none of this.

At length there came to him a tall grey-haired man in a jacket of naval cut. He extended a hand.

"Don't you recognize me? We've met before. My name is Kovalev."

There was something familiar in the man's voice and looks, but Stoletov could not place him. He returned the firm handclasp and looked at the dark-complexioned face with its early sun tan, and tried hard to recall something connected with the name, with that thick, rather testy voice, with the broad forehead and the deep furrows that bit into it vertically.

"Don't you remember?" said Kovalev. "We met at a technical conference three years ago. I spoke about a design for a new machine. Have you forgotten that argument about the mechanical 'sand shrew'?"

The "sand shrew!" Stoletov at once recalled the big sheet of cartridge paper with a drawing of a machine unlike any he had ever seen before. The design was original and on quite new lines. The machine

could be adapted to do various jobs—dig out earth, unload sand or coal from barges and replace cranes in certain building jobs.

"I remember very well now," said Stoletov looking at the unexpected acquaintance. "But, if you don't mind my saying so, Comrade Kovalev, you've changed a lot since then."

That time, too, Kovalev had worn that jacket, rather like naval uniform, and his voice had the same impatient, compelling ring in it, but there were not those furrows in his broad forehead and his face had not worn that heavy, closed-up expression. Things must have been rough for the fellow, thought Stoletov. No wonder he hadn't recognized him. . . .

But he kept quiet about that and spoke about the machine.

"The idea was interesting," he said, recalling the argument that broke out after Kovalev's report. "Did you manage to break down the opposition? There was plenty of it, if I remember well."

"Yes, there was and there still is. I've no victory to boast of; I've given up the fight. Surrendered and pulled into a quiet harbour."

Kovalev spoke rather defiantly and at once fell silent as if putting a full-stop to the conversation on that subject. Tall, broad-shouldered, he stood beside Stoletov and unsmilingly returned the greetings of the passers-by. Stoletov watched him out of the corner of his eye and for some reason felt glad that he had met this man.

"Hello, Arseni Mikhailovich, so you know the new Party organizer?" the stout man in the blouse who had spoken at the meeting about the village of Nepryakhino called across the passage. "Let me introduce myself, Syurtukov. Ivan Trefilyevich. I'm a fitter. I work with him," he added, nodding at Kovalev.

The new-comer looked merrily at the two men; then his small mischievous eyes sought out someone among the passers-by. He grasped a thin man by the sleeve.

"This is secretary of the Party group in the foundry," he said by way of introduction. "Vsevolod Nikitich Lepikhin."

Syurtukov seemed to take pleasure in introducing his comrades, for he stopped everybody who happened to come near their group. Stoletov was soon surrounded by people who shook hands with him and told him who they were, while Syurtukov kept his eye on those who hung back and shoved them to the fore.

"Come here, Lyuba," he called to the girl who had been sitting next to him at the meeting. "Come on. Don't be shy."

But the girl did not move. Syurtukov explained that she was the Comsomol secretary and a fine, energetic girl. What was more, considering that practically all the workers at the factory were young, she thought she was the real chief of the place.

Stoletov was not left alone again the whole evening. All the time he was surrounded by people, answering their questions or listening to what they had to say about themselves, the factory or the new housing estate. And when everybody poured into the street after the meeting, several people accompanied him back to the factory hotel; Syurtukov even invited him home, and when Stoletov pleaded that he was tired, came up to his room with him instead.

"You should have come to my place," he said, glancing round the room.

"You won't get anything to eat or drink here. We could have had supper together. Perhaps you'll change your mind?"...

Stoletov, however, wanted to be on his own.

"Thank you, Ivan Trefilyevich." He wished him good night. "Any other time I'll come with pleasure."

Syurtukov left. Switching off the light, Stoletov lay on the bed. He lay in the dark with eyes wide open, trying to think of his programme for the following day. But other things came into his mind: the few words with which the secretary of the regional committee of the Communist Party had recommended him to the meeting; then, his talk with Kovalev; then, swiftly replacing each other as they loomed up in the darkness, the faces of the Communists, together with snatches of their conversation.

He remembered the work he had left behind at the previous factory—the design of a big mechanical shovel on which he had been working with a large group of designers. He remembered his home, his wife Varya, his sons Ivan and Demyan, various half-finished jobs, the books he had not read to the end. With a sigh he rose from the bed where he had lain sleepless for over an hour, and went to the window.

The window overlooked a square beyond which he could see the dark shape of the factory buildings. The windows of some of the buildings blazed with light: that was where the night shift was working. Other windows were dark. Over the glass roof of the foundry shop a rosy glow lit the sky. The factory was strange to him, a place he had yet to explore. In it worked men and women whom Stoletov did not know, people with whom he had to live and work.

2

A few days after the meeting Stoletov wrote a long letter to his wife.

"I must confess, Varya dear," he wrote, "that I have a strong yearning to be back at the old job. Please call at the designing office and find out how things are going on the project. Have they solved the problem of enlarging the scoop and lengthening the arm? Tell them that I have been thinking about it here and I think I've hit on something interesting. . . ."

Putting the letter aside, he opened a drawer in the table and took out a sheet of paper covered with figures and formulae. At the side was a drawing of the arm of a mechanical shovel—well-proportioned, light, it carried effortlessly a heavy, closed scoop.

Stoletov sighed, glanced through the calculations again and turned back to his letter.

"I am enclosing a sketch of my idea. Let the comrades have it and ask them to write to me if it is suitable. Maybe they've discovered something better. Yesterday, when I was at a meeting of Party activists, I thought about the shovel's arm and this idea came into my mind. I think it's the right one."

He smiled to himself as he recalled how at that meeting the chairman kept glancing at him, thinking, probably, that the new Party organizer was roughing out the text of his speech. Then the chairman's eyes fell on Stoletov's notebook and he gaped with surprise at the figures and the sketch.

"You are in my thoughts every day," wrote Stoletov. "Little boys, too, and all the family. How are you getting on? Not forgotten me? Really, it was wrong of you to send me off here on my own. I'm living like a hermit-crab—I've no friends—nobody looks after me—there's nobody to

clean the spots on my jacket or iron my shirts—I'm all fluffy and hairy. Plenty of work. More than I can easily manage. . . ."

Stoletov threw himself into his work with zest: much of his time he spent in the shops getting to know people and looking for helpers and friends among them. He had been used to working in a large collective and was worried not to find more Communists—only some two hundred in all. He soon knew them all by name, for he found their names everywhere—in the lists of activists, on the factory trade-union committee, on various commissions and bureaus. Wherever public-spirited men and women were needed he found the names of the Communists. As a result, instead of each Communist having a single responsibility to occupy him, he was burdened with a whole string of most varied tasks. Why the devil weren't they doing better in drawing non-Party people into the work, Stoletov asked himself as he examined for the nth time the list of Communists engaged in social activities. It was wrong to have everything hanging on a single peg. No, this wasn't the way to work.

During his visits to the shops he found himself comparing Verkhnyaya Kamenka unfavourably with the factory he used to work at. The old factory was like a house which has been lived in for many years and contains all kinds of useful things that have accumulated over a long period of time, things acquired gradually as the result of years of experience. Here, though, everything was half-baked, unfinished; shortages kept cropping up, unforeseen things happened. The factory had to get itself organized and at the same time to fulfil its production programme—and it often seemed to Stoletov that the combined task was beyond its powers.

Stoletov mentioned his misgivings to nobody except his wife to whom he wrote long, detailed letters. He confided in Varya all his interests, thoughts and moods. He hid nothing from her. That had long been their way. Neither of them could conceive of any other relationship.

But it was one thing to come back from work and tell Varya in person all his worries of that day, and quite another to write to her about them and then wait for her reply. Often it happened that while his letter was on the way and before he had received Varya's reply, events had taken quite another turn and Varya's advice came too late to be of any use.

So it was with the letter he sent soon after his arrival. He had written to Varya about the arm for the mechanical shovel, only to realize a few days later that he had made an error in his calculations; he then decided to make a radical change in the design. But Varya had already passed on the first, the wrong design, to the factory and written to say how grateful Stoletov's comrades were for his help. There was nothing else to do but send a telegram: "Cancel arm sending new design shortly."

Besides, in her replies to his letters, Varya expressed regret that she could not share the hardships of her poor husband's unorganized life, and reproached him for not making new friends and settling down.

"It's all sheer pig-headedness on your part," she wrote. "You should have refused to go there from the start, but once there you ought to settle down and not live like a hermit-crab. Make some friends. Go to people's houses and invite them out yourself. You are not a one to live without friends; I know that. Until you find some you'll go on writing me those sour letters. Living on your own isn't your nature."

These edifying words reached Stoletov too late: before Varya's letter

came, Stoletov had met some people and certainly could not complain of loneliness.

The first to call on the new Party organizer was the editor of the works' newspaper. This turned out to be the bespectacled Chumov who had plagued Stoletov with his questions at the meeting and made so many hurried notes in his pad. This time, too, he had his notebook in hand; from it protruded book-marks and ragged-edged sheets of paper which looked as if they had been folded and unfolded many times.

"May I come in?" the visitor asked, shutting the door carefully behind him and introducing himself.

In the light of day Chumov looked sleeker than ever. His soft hands felt quite boneless; sharp eyes looked from behind his spectacles. His smile revealed large yellowish teeth.

"I have called so that we can get to know each other and to complete the material I gathered at the meeting," said Chumov as he lowered himself into a chair. "We are going to print a detailed profile of you, together with your photograph. Incidentally, could you let me have a photograph?"

"No," said Stoletov. "And you shouldn't print anything personal about me."

Opening his notebook, Chumov examined its contents thoughtfully. He gave no indication of having heard Stoletov's remark.

"There are a few things here that are not clear," he said, looking up at length. "You said that when you arrived at Sharya you lived with your uncle. Later you moved from your uncle's to a hostel. You ought to make clear who your uncle was and why you left him. And another thing: what honours did you obtain at college, or did you graduate without honours?"

"My reason for leaving my uncle's was purely personal," replied Stoletov. "He was a railway conductor, a fact that is not of the slightest importance in my life. I graduated without honours. I'm telling you this to satisfy your personal curiosity. I repeat: you must not print my photograph or anything about me in the paper."

"My personal curiosity is inspired by the interests of society. Our factory collective ought to know something about the man who is henceforth to be in charge of political work."

"They'll get to know him, all right," said Stoletov. "People should be judged by their work and not according to who their uncles were."

Chumov's manner changed. Snapping his notebook to, he said:

"Your instructions will be heeded. We shall not print either your photograph or any details about your life. We shall keep to a bare announcement. . . . And now I should like to speak to you about something else, about this material I have here."

Chumov drew from his notebook a file of sheets held together by a paper-clip. He smoothed out the creases with his soft plump hand. The material could not have been new—the sheets of paper were ragged at the edges and folded almost to shreds.

"I am really glad, Stepan Demyanovich, that a real Communist has come to the factory," Chumov began, covering his papers with the notebook. "I am sure that you will introduce order and restrain various people who have got out of hand. I have long been looking for the truth, Stepan Demyanovich, and, unfortunately, I have far from always found it. . . ."

He sighed and went on to tell how difficult a time he had had in his campaign for truth and justice, and how he had been exposed to slander and persecution, but had not given up and did not intend to. There was a note of self-pity in his voice, yet when someone looked in through the door he snapped at him: "Wait outside. We're busy."

Really, Stoletov reflected, the man behaved as if he were in his own office. He might at least not play the boss here and give orders. And now he was talking in quite a different tone, buzzing like a fly, so monotonous, gabbling on as if he were afraid he would not be allowed to finish what he had to say. With reason, perhaps, because he was an utter bore. Difficult to understand what he was saying, he was so shifty with those puzzling hints and undertones. . . .

It grew dark outside. The sky clouded over and slanting rain began to beat against the window. How cheerless a young thin tree looked with its unopened leaves, how it rocked in the wind and bent to the ground as if it were going to snap. Two women dashed across the square towards the factory—the rain had caught them on the road where there was no shelter, the square was large and open, they had to run with bent heads. . . . And what was that sudden loud noise? Water was gushing from a drain-pipe which, for some reason, lacked its last section so that the water poured off the roof right between the windows of his office.

"I have everything set out in the form of a report with all supporting documentation," said Chumov in a business-like manner. "Some things, naturally, cannot be documented but in those cases the notes list witness and evidence."

He pushed his report over to Stoletov. Stoletov removed the paper-clip and spread the pages in front of him. There were many of them, typed in blurred, lilac ink. The carbon must have been worn out; or, perhaps, this was the last, faint copy of several made at once.

Stoletov examined the document with distaste. He could see at once that this was a carefully compiled denunciation, consisting of scraps of knowledge that defamed many people on matters both old and quite up-to-date.

He reluctantly registered a number of facts—goings-on in the girls' hostel where the inmates received their boy friends under the guise of husbands; a woman compositor called Polina who had been discharged from the print-shop for impertinence and indiscipline and had been appointed warden at Number Five Hostel—what had she to teach young people? To be rude and disobedient to their chiefs? The factory manager was tyrannical and obstinate; he did not heed public opinion, had wangled a three-room flat for himself and his wife; Kovalev, a Communist and manager of the machine shop, had divorced his wife and abandoned his school-girl daughter; Yelena Vlashevna Protasova, a turner, a member of the factory trade-union committee, was overfond of drink and held drinking parties in her house (that had started as long ago as during the war); Zvonaryeva, the secretary of the Comsomol committee, took no notice of the press, did not reply to remarks by Comsomol members published in the newspaper, and bought herself a car on means that came from no one knew where; the father of Nazarenko, a Comsomol member, had, according to everything that could be ascertained, been a condemned kulak, a fact that Nazarenko had never revealed. . . . Names and dates jumped before Stoletov's eyes.

Chumov waited patiently for Stoletov to finish reading his report. He watched him carefully; twice he wiped his glasses. Read on, read on, learn what a cesspool you've fallen into. Get to know the people around you in this factory. How much effort and time had he, Chumov, spent in struggle against these people, how many statements had he made about each one of them.

"Yes, it's a murky picture," Stoletov said when he had finished. "I'll take it all up, Comrade Chumov. I'll speak to the other members of the bureau about it."

It was unpleasant to start his work at a new place with a collection of statements like this. But the report existed; there it lay on his desk and there was no getting away from it. He would willingly have put it away in the farthest corner of the drawer in his desk but personnel questions were his prime concern and the statements dealt with those very people with whom he had to work.

"I should not recommend you to bring my report to the knowledge of the bureau," warned Chumov. "Among the members of the bureau are some who defend the unworthy elements I have written about. I suggest that my report be classified as secret. . . ."



"I cannot have any secrets from other members of the bureau," replied Stoletov drily. "I am not prepared to make a secret of your report."

He said this in the hope that Chumov would, perhaps, ask for his papers back. That, it seemed, was Chumov's intention, for he extended his hand uncertainly, gathered the papers together and replaced the clip, but after a moment's reflection, handed the report back to Stoletov.

"I hope, Stepan Demyanovich, that I shall not have to suffer for my revelations. I am acting in the interests of the state. I am not concerned with my personal advantages."

His small plump figure slipped out of the room as silently as a mouse. What was that trailing behind him on the floor, like a tail? Ah, it was the strap of a letter-case which he had worn over his shoulder but was now clasped to his side under his arm.

So that was the editor, thought Stoletov as he took a file of newspapers from a table. Well, he would have a look at the fellow's handiwork.

But before he sat down to examine the factory newspaper he went to the window and opened it; the office felt stuffy. . . .

3

Yelena Vlashevna Protasova who worked as a turner in the machine shop came to the offices of the Communist Party committee with a complaint: she wanted a special tool locker made for her; the foreman had promised to get it done but had done nothing about it. She had reminded him about it several times and in the end he had flared up and told her that he had more important things to worry about than her locker and that it could wait.

"Wait?" she complained to Stoletov. "There's a lot depends on that locker: if I had everything handy I could work ever so much faster. Why, that's something any housewife would understand. Once you let your pots and pans stray from you, you'll be running all over the house looking for them and it'll be nightfall before you have dinner dished up."

Yelena Protasova sat opposite Stoletov and spoke with such conviction that he at once believed in her locker and in its importance to her. He enquired precisely what sort of a locker she had in mind and Yelena told him: the top was to slant like a school-desk, the door was to be in one piece and inside there were to be five shelves for various cutting-tools, for a measuring instrument and for lubricating materials and cleaning rags.

"Why, I gave him a sketch of it with all the dimensions; it wouldn't have cost much, but all the same they didn't do anything about it. Look, I'll draw it for you myself."

She looked round for a sheet of paper, thriftily took the smallest one from a pile on the desk and, choosing a sharp pencil, assiduously drew a locker not unlike those that are to be seen beside hospital beds.

"Can you make it out?" she asked doubtfully. "I'm not much of a hand at drawing."

"I get the idea," said Stoletov as he examined the drawing. "Quite an interesting little cupboard. Your own idea?"

"Mine? Of course not," laughed Yelena. "I took a book out of the library, about advanced methods in turning, and it was there I noticed this locker. It says in the book that by putting lockers like that in the factory they cut down the time spent in getting the machine ready by a half—from twenty-seven minutes to fifteen. They wouldn't make a thing like that up. Now we sometimes spend as much as forty-seven minutes in making ready and all because of the bad arrangement of working space."

Yelena Protasova's voice was soft. She spoke quietly, a little timidly even, as if it embarrassed her to take up Stoletov's time with her private

business. Yet her manner conveyed the feeling that until that business was settled she would give herself or anybody else no rest.

Stoletov liked her from first sight. He liked her firm assurance in the rightness of her case, the thrifty concern that the working space should be arranged conveniently. He liked her appearance—full-faced with slightly prominent cheek-bones, her broad brow lightly wrinkled, her hair touched with grey and divided by a parting as straight as a die.

He made up his mind to see that Yelena Protasova certainly got her locker and promised to speak to the head of the department about the matter.

"That's good," Yelena said, rising to her feet. "Thank you. Now I shall feel sure of getting it."

Stoletov telephoned to Kovalev as soon as the woman had left his office. He did not have to explain the details of the locker: Kovalev told him that the sketch lay on his desk and promised to order it that very day. The shop manager spoke of Protasova in friendly tones, a fact that Stoletov noted with pleasure.

A few days later Yelena Protasova came to the Party committee office again and announced with satisfaction that the locker was ready and now stood near her lathe.

"You ought to see that the other turners get them too, Stepan Demyanovich," she said in her quiet calm voice. "I'm saving at least twenty minutes a shift now. How much would it come to if everybody saved as much? I calculate that three people can save an hour between them. And if every turner in the factory were saving that much? How many turners are there in all?"

Stoletov did not know and Yelena looked at him reproachfully. He promised that he would bring the locker question up before the office for the organization of labour; Yelena wrote in her little book the name of one of the workers in that office so that she should know who to keep on to about the matter.

Business over, Yelena was for a moment at a loss for words but quickly overcame her shyness and asked resolutely: "I've heard you're living in the hotel. Do you mean to say they haven't found you a flat yet?"

"I don't need one," Stoletov replied. "I came here on my own. A room's all I need."

"On your own? But I heard you were a married man with two sons."

"So they even know about my sons, do they?" said Stoletov with a laugh. "How did they find out about them?"

"Oh, we know everything about everybody here," replied Yelena calmly. "People are interested to know why your wife didn't come along with you."

Stoletov did not reply at first. The woman's lack of ceremony upset him and he felt like telling her to mind her own business. But he did not tell her that: the question had been asked in a friendly, kind voice and he realized that what had prompted it was not tactlessness or curiosity but genuine sympathy and a wish to help another to arrange his life.

"My wife has a job which she can't drop," he replied. "When she gets her holidays she'll join me here."

"To live alone is the last thing anybody wants to do," sighed Yelena. "By the way, have you had your dinner, Stepan Demyanovich?" she asked with concern. "Come and eat with me. I'll cook you something."

It's not good to go to bed on an empty stomach. The canteen's been long shut and there's no sense in your going to the Green Mountain Restaurant."

She rose, confident in Stoletov's acceptance; and he, involuntarily submitting to the will of this likeable woman, stood up and reached for his hat.

They went out of doors. A cool spring breeze blew in their faces. The breeze brought the scent of melting snow and damp earth, of the pine woods and the lake that had only just been freed of ice. The pine woods were out of sight but the sigh of the wind could be heard among the trees; far below, the waters of the lake splashed and slapped against the banks; and all these scents and sounds were accentuated because close by a five-storey white apartment house stood with its windows aglow with light, a chain of street lights ran from the house to the factory, and over the glass roofs of the factory's shops hung a pale aura of electric light.

"You get a strange mixture here," said Stoletov. "Something completely urban and next to it Nature in all her primitive beauty. It's unusual, but it's lovely. It's a pity, though, that Nature's had to retreat."

"Nature has retreated just as far as she was ordered to," said Yelena. "She won't have to go any further—that's not allowed for in the plan."

She pointed somewhere in the darkness and said that quite recently all this neighbourhood was covered with forest.

"Do you find that hard to believe? Well, ten or twelve years ago you could meet bears where we're walking now. I've seen them myself and my late husband shot two of them. He, like me, was born here, we lived in the old village where the forest came right up to the edge of the place."

She walked sure-footedly over the uneven ground—the road was not asphalted here. They had passed the last street lamp and ahead of them shone only a few, widely-separated lights. That was the old village built many years ago near a small metal works. The works had been destroyed by Kolchak's bands during the Civil War, the blast-furnaces blown up and the rolling-mill equipment pillaged.

"Then afterwards, during the reconstruction, the factory wasn't included in the plan," said Yelena. "There would have been no sense in rebuilding it: why, the way we see things now that little place wouldn't be called a works. And old it was too, built a long, long time ago. There was nothing of it left but ruins—a pile of bricks and stones. That and our village."

They walked up to the gate of a low-roofed cottage with three windows in the front; Yelena rattled the latch and flung the wicket gate open. A big white dog ran up whimpering, and leaped around her wagging its tail.

"Feeling lonely, Sharik? Poor old thing, being on your own all day. Come on, I'll let you in now."

Yelena opened the front door and switched on lights over the porch, in the passage where a tub of water stood, and in the kitchen which had a large whitewashed stove.

"Come in, Stepan Demyanovich," she said invitingly. "Make yourself comfortable while I get supper ready."

She drew the window curtains, switched on the light in the two small

living-rooms, tidied something on the bed as she passed it, popped something else into a cupboard and took something into the kitchen. The dog hung on her heels, wagging its bushy tail. She went to the shelf and took down a pan.

"My neighbours laugh at me and say I'd do better to raise a pig," said Yelena as she fed the dog. "But I'm fond of the brute. I've got used to him. My husband brought him home as a pup with the idea of training him to the gun but never got round to it. . . . My girls were small then and used to play with him; he went along with them to the school gate. He'd wait there till they came out again. In those days the school was a long way off and without him the girls would have been afraid to walk there."

She told Stoletov about her daughters and her husband, all the time on the go about the room as she spread a clean cloth and laid the table. All her movements were nimble and somehow happy; she had but to touch something for it to become important and attractive: the embroidered table-cloth burst into a bright coloured pattern, every berry glowed ruddy in the jam pot. Yelena Protasova rose still higher in Stoletov's estimation; he felt very glad that he had come to this cosy bright home instead of returning to his empty cheerless room.

The supper appeared on the table as swiftly as if it had been standing somewhere ready to be brought in. Pickled cucumbers, sauerkraut, cold meat cut in large generous slices—the sight of it made Stoletov recall that he had not supped and was really hungry. Stealing a sideways glance at her visitor, Yelena took a decanter of vodka and two silver drinking cups out of the cupboard.

"Have one?" she asked.

Stoletov raised his glass to drink to his hostess' health.

She clinked glasses with him and tossed off the vodka easily, like a man, without making a wry face or choking over it.

"Before the war I never touched a drop," she said serving Stoletov with sauerkraut. "A little wine in company, maybe, but not vodka. During the war, though, when I was left on my own, I stopped being squeamish about vodka. Those were hard times, specially the first winter. The girls were small and didn't understand anything and not a letter did I get from my husband from the time he left for the front. I found out why later on: he was killed in his first engagement. I didn't know that then and I went on waiting and waiting for a letter from him that never came so that I was fair eaten up with worry. Times there were when I'd take both girls into my bed and lie there in the darkness and bit my teeth into the pillow for the loneliness. It'd be pitch black outside, for we didn't have electricity then; and what with Sharik howling in the yard and the wind wailing, my thoughts would get gloomier and gloomier. . . . I'd wait till the little girls had gone off to sleep; then I'd get up quietly and go over to my neighbour whose husband was at the front like mine. I'd go and get her out of bed and we'd have a drink together and sit and cry till our hearts felt eased."

She poured Stoletov another noggin, drained her own and asked him where he was in the war. She spoke kindly as if to one of her own family and drew from him memories of days at the front that were bitter and others that were joyful, and of his comrades in arms. He proposed that they drink to the health of those who came back and to the memory of those who did not.

"We remember them," said Yelena. "Nor is my husband forgotten. His name was Stepan, too, like yours."

She raised her glass, drank and with the back of her hand dashed away tears that she made no effort to conceal. Stoletov looked at that face that had lost its youth, wanted to say something consoling but kept his tongue; for he knew that nothing he said could console her sorrow.

Yelena Protasova sat with her chin cupped in her hand. The room was silent except for an occasional whimper from the sleeping dog and the ticking of the kitchen clock. What was in the widow's mind? What memories haunted her? Were they of that dreadful night after she heard the news of her husband's death? Or of his love that she was never to know again? Or of her daughters who had left her roof to live far away?

"It's hard enough to be left a widow when you are young but it's twice as hard when you're getting on," said Yelena, raising her tearful eyes to Stoletov. "A young woman grieves and weeps but she can still find happiness in life. But to be widowed when you're middle-aged means saying good-bye to happiness for ever. There's nobody to care for you, nobody except your children. And children's love isn't lasting, it only lasts till they give their hearts away to someone else."

She smiled wanly and pushed the dish of cold meat nearer to Stoletov.

"Help yourself, Stepan Demyanovich; you're not eating anything. You must be thinking I asked you in to make you listen to funeral orations. But it was you who brought me to it."

Rising from the table, she brought the kettle which had come to the boil, took out of the oven a puffy cake that she had put there to warm up and brewed some strong tea. And as if putting a period to the sad talk, she started telling Stoletov about the village Soviet and the factory shops and how her mates worked in her team.

"You know, it comforts me to work in the factory," she said. "It's a good place, and the young folk there work well, though little is done to teach them. That's wrong, of course. People come straight from school and start their own lives without knowing how to do it. Of course the Comsomol puts them on the right lines but that's made up of young people too; the older people just don't care."

She spoke softly and calmly, as she had done in Stoletov's office when she was talking about the locker, but in her manner there was something that showed she was firmly convinced that she was right. She was expressing ideas that had been thought over and put to the test; she did not speak lightly; she expected Stoletov to pay some attention to those ideas.

When Stoletov rose to leave, Yelena slipped a shawl over her shoulders and accompanied him to the front gate. The dog, stretching lazily, trotted after them, ran into the street and barked at the darkness.

"Do you think you'll find your way?" asked Yelena. "Just keep straight on till the road begins to climb the hill. Then you'll see the factory."

She called the dog and closed the gate behind her; Stoletov found himself alone in the dark, empty street. He walked along the uneven path past low timber cottages with their windows tightly shuttered. There was not a light to be seen in them, not a human voice to be heard. It was as if the inhabitants of this village had abandoned it for some more populous, brighter place.

The sky was dark too; only at the end of the road where the ridge of the hill was vaguely outlined did it grow somewhat lighter. Beyond that

ridge lay the factory and the new houses and lamp-lit streets. Stoletov had never seen lamps like those before: from each silvered standard they hung in clusters of five milk-white globes. On the square in front of the factory and on the main street with its several tall blocks of flats the street-lamps burned abundantly.

Despite the late hour, there were many people in the main street. A film show had just finished and the public was streaming out of the doors of the club-house; in the street a loud-speaker was emitting gay music and three cyclists were speeding round the paths in the public gardens.

Remembering that a letter to Varya lay in his pocket, Stoletov dropped it in a post-box and was about to make his way back to the hotel when he heard his name called. He looked round and saw the factory manager hurrying towards him across the street, followed by a short woman who had some difficulty in keeping up with her companion.

"Where on earth have you been, Stepan Demyanovich? We called to take you to the cinema. This is my wife, Anna Ivanovna. Come back and have supper with us."

"I've had supper, thanks," said Stoletov. "I was invited to the old village. I just managed to find my way back. What's the reason for the contrast? Here you'd think you were on Gorky Street in Moscow but it's pitch dark there. Surely they could have some street-lighting down there?"

"What, in the old village? No sense in that," the factory manager said confidently. "They've lived there without street-lighting for a thousand years and they'll manage without it now. I don't intend to spend any of the factory funds on these small craftsmen and vegetable-growers. Let the village Soviet look after it."

There was unconcealed irritation in the manager's voice, a tone that displeased Stoletov.

"I don't know what small craftsmen and vegetable-growers live there," he said, "but I've just spent the evening with a fine person, a factory worker. And I don't see why she should have to risk breaking her leg on roads like that."

"We are rehousing those who are employed at the factory. You were probably at the Syurtukovs or at old Poteryayev's place, I suppose. Give us time and we shall house them in such flats as have never been seen even in the regional centre—plenty of light, high ceilings, electric cookers, bath-rooms, open fire-places. And we shall build those houses in the pine woods overlooking the lake, not on the bare mountainside like the old village."

The factory manager spoke in a loud voice; passers-by slowed down to listen to him while his little wife looked at him with alarm. Afanasi Ivanovich Budanov was exceptionally tall. Thin and angular, he towered above everybody in any company he happened to be. His head was small and almost hairless, which gave him a bird-like appearance that was added to by his round yellowish eyes and a sharp, slightly curved beak of a nose.

A hawk, thought Stoletov. All the attributes of a hawk. While his wife was a little hen. She seemed to be afraid of him, afraid he might peck her to death any moment.

They left the pavement and crossed the square in front of the factory. The cyclists were still at it, circling the gardens quite noiselessly, each rider bent low over the handle bars. Their legs moved at an incredible speed; no one wanted to slack off and they kept up with each other, three abreast.

"They're training for the regional competition," said Budanov, nodding in their direction. "They've promised to win. We won the swimming but we lost at football and skiing. Not much to boast about in other events, either. We keep a special coach on the staff but what he does the devil only knows."

Budanov walked on waving his arms and taking long strides, quite heedless of the fact that he was leaving his wife behind. She was obviously tired but afraid to say so; it was Stoletov who suggested they should sit down on a bench he noticed in the gardens.

"All right, let's sit down if you've decided not to come home with us," agreed Budanov. "You were saying that it's like Gorky Street here. I'd like to have three rows of lamp standards in this square so that people could see the fruits of their labour better."

He turned his small head towards the works and fixed his yellow bird-eyes on the brightly-lit buildings. Lamps like search-lights stood at the entrances and near the administrative building; festoons of small lamps framed a poster that hung near the main gates; and the red flag on the roof of the works was illuminated from below and fluttered in the air like a flame.

Budanov's pipe had gone out. He struck a match, shielding the flame with his hands. The wind was warm; it swayed the thin saplings growing among the flower borders in the garden. The trees had been planted quite recently; each one of them was neatly tied to a strong stake. The wind brought the scent of freshly turned earth and Stoletov recalled how that morning he had seen school children working in the gardens, digging the beds and planting bulbs and roots.

He looked at the apartment house where every window shone brightly; he listened to the panting breath of the factory, to the steady hum of its shops, the high, ringing sound of blows on metal, the frequent chirrup of the electric welders at their work. Could it be only ten years ago since in this place century-old fir trees raised their shaggy tops and under a carpet of snow, moss and bilberries grew over tree-stumps rotten with age?

"You were saying that we ought to put street-lamps in the old village," said Budanov as he pulled at his pipe. "And I'm dreaming of razing the place to the ground. It's an eyesore to me with all its hovels and its wattle fences. We built a whole town in the last ten years, in less than ten, in fact, because during the war we did nothing about houses but built workshops and produced for the front. It's only now that we are getting into our stride. Just you see what we shall do during the next five years. Lovely homes for happy people. And there we have that squalor next door to us, those dingy old cottages which nobody wants except those who have a sense of private property eating into them like rust."

Budanov made a gesture of contempt and suddenly rose from the bench; people had begun to come out of the factory gates. Doors slammed, feet rang out on the pavement, voices echoed, drowning every other noise. A bus driver blew his horn and manoeuvred his charge carefully through

the human flood. People who lived at the other end of the settlement rode in it.

The workers hurried off: Budanov watched them. He waited until the square emptied, took Stoletov and his wife by the arm and walked home. When they parted he said to Stoletov with unexpected feeling, as though continuing some subject they had been discussing:

"I'd like to live another hundred years. I'd like to see what sort of show man can make of things, then I'd die in peace."

4

Stoletov saw Kovalev, the manager of the first machine shop, almost every day. The shop was considered the best in the factory and its reputation was well-deserved: this was the place where advanced production methods were adopted; its workers carefully followed the achievements of other factories and tried to take a leaf out of their book; young foremen from other shops came there for advice when they ran up against snags in their own work.

Kovalev was undoubtedly a fine organizer and an experienced engineer. In spite of his reserved manner, people liked and trusted him. Young people felt drawn to him; he was always glad to help them and paid special attention to them. The old hands had confidence in him and recognized his unquestionable authority in a most varied range of technical questions.

But there were some in the works who did not approve of Kovalev; among them the head technologist, the chief of the construction bureau and the managers of several shops. There was a certain coolness in the way that Budanov, too, spoke of Kovalev: he admitted that Kovalev was a good manager but he told Stoletov once that "that would not last" because Kovalev was restless and cantankerous by nature and might at any moment go off at a tangent.

"He's got no elasticity in his nature," said Budanov. "And that sometimes leads to very much unpleasantness."

"Sometimes the word 'elasticity' is a cloak for something quite different—lack of principle," Stoletov demurred. "Perhaps the situation is something quite different: maybe Kovalev is really showing himself devoted to principle when he is certain that he's right but expresses himself so sharply that he is accused of lacking elasticity."

"Well, I'm not one of those who make a habit of bending over backwards, you know," Budanov said touchily. "But I won't break my head against a wall when you can easily go round it—still less even refuse to look at the alternative. Kovalev, however, subscribes to the crude theory that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and that's the only line he means to take. All the same, he works well and I'm very keen to keep him with us."

Stoletov liked the obstinate uncompromising sort. He, too, did not possess the ability to slip round obstacles that arose in his path, and he sympathized with those who went head on at such obstacles. He liked Kovalev, he liked that invention of his that deserved an attention it had not received. . . .

He had not had an occasion to mention the subject of the "sand shrew" to Kovalev again. His first few weeks at the factory were fully taken

up with a vast amount of organizational work. He had to allot duties carefully to each member of the Communist Party bureau, set up social organizations within the factory, find energetic, efficient people among the large factory collective and assign concrete tasks to these people. He had dozens of people to advise him—Communists and non-Party people, factory workers and engineers. His office became a staff headquarters where at definite times would gather everybody who was capable of exercising an influence over the countless social activities of the collective.

One evening, as he came out of the works trade-union office after a gathering of top-speed operators, Stoletov bumped into Kovalev who had arrived late for the meeting.

"Finished already?" asked Kovalev in surprise. "I thought you had enough to keep you talking till dawn."

"It's a straightforward matter and there wasn't much to discuss," said Stoletov. "We decided as an experiment to draw up a technological chart on the productivity of the best machine-tool operators; special people were allotted to the job and that was all." He stopped, thinking how he could retain Kovalev. "It's a lovely evening," he went on. "A chap needs a breath of fresh air after work instead of sitting up late in a smoky room."

He glanced at Kovalev's dark, tired face and remarked that the shop manager also had the right to some woodland air and a stroll after work.

"I was thinking of going for a stroll. Won't you keep me company?"

Kovalev nodded silently and accompanied Stoletov downstairs.

"You're an old inhabitant," said Stoletov with a glance at his companion. "You decide where we should go. I'd enjoy a walk in the woods. They're fine now in early spring."

"Early spring!" said Kovalev with a laugh. "You can't have noticed what's been happening. Early spring is when the snow hasn't all melted. Why, the poplars in the factory square are coming into leaf now."

"It's true, I haven't noticed. It was early spring when I arrived and since then I've not had time to look round."

They walked along the broad asphalted pavement of the main street, past some tall stone-faced buildings. This street had a completely urban look about it, but as soon as the last of the houses was past, it stopped short, the asphalt gave way to an unmetalled road and real, unspoiled woods began. Silver birches, dappled with young green leaves, displayed their gleaming trunks. The grass was still brown but in one place Stoletov noticed a large patch of tiny white flowers.

"Look, snowdrops," he said to Kovalev who was walking silently at his side. "I'd pick a bunch if I had anyone to give it to. Do you have anybody to give flowers to?"

"No, I'm here on my own," Kovalev replied shortly.

His answer made any further talk on that subject impossible. Stoletov reflected that he would have answered the question differently. He would have said that though he was on his own at the moment, he was expecting his family to join him before long. He walked past the flowers with a feeling of regret: had Varya been there, he would certainly have picked a bunch for her.

They walked on, talking about nothing in particular: a tree whose trunk had been split by lightning, a large bird that flew across the road and set them arguing whether it was a capercaillie or an ordinary grouse,

a snake that flashed in the dry grass. Why was it that a snake bite was more poisonous in the spring than in summer time?

They followed a track deeply rutted by lorry-wheels till they came to a sand-pit. The high sides of the pit reminded Stoletov of the drawing that Kovalev had used to illustrate his design at the technical conference: he remembered that golden-yellow sand, that leafless bush with the withered roots hanging over the edge, just clinging to the earth. He could not resist mentioning the subject to Kovalev.

"I have that picture over my desk," Kovalev replied with a wry smile. "If it made such an impression on you, I'd be glad to give it you."

"If it comes to hanging up pictures, I'd rather have one of a mechanical shovel," Stoletov said. "There's something lovely about a mechanical shovel, something swanlike about its long, finely proportioned jib. Now your machine, if you'll excuse me saying so, reminds me more of a mole."

"A swan is meant to swim and a mole to burrow in the earth," said Kovalev. "It doesn't matter if the thing looks like a mole as long as it works properly."

They sat on a pile of logs that lay near the edge of the sand-pit, and lighted cigarettes. A limpid evening light spread over the ground; mist formed in the hollows; far away in the direction of the factory a train whistled faintly. The sand hissed as it slid down the steep walls of the pit, sometimes checked by a protuberance, sometimes pouring down to the bottom in thin streams.

"I've quite fallen in love with the mechanical shovel," said Stoletov as he watched the sliding sand. "For me it represents a symbol of the might of the machine. . . . I've seen plenty of machines in my time, any number of machine-tools and different sorts of machinery. But the mechanical shovel appeals to me more than anything else. I must confess, Arseni Mikhailovich, that I feel miserable at being cut off from my mechanical shovel."

Picking up a twig, he drew on the ground the slanting arm of a mechanical shovel driving a scoop into the side of a quarry. Kovalev watched in silence as he carefully drew in the teeth of the scoop.

"I understand very well how you must feel, Stepan Demyanovich," Kovalev said with an unusually gentle inflection. "It's always hard to tear yourself away from something you are really keen on. But technically the mechanical shovel belongs to the past. If you mean to look ahead, then you must seek new principles and new methods of construction for excavating machines. People are on the look-out for new ideas and finding them too; you know that yourself."

"But excavators have developed, too," objected Stoletov jealously. "They're always being improved and made more powerful. Think of the walking excavators that the Urals Machine Works are building, for instance."

"An improvement, yes, but still sticking to the old principle. You must agree that a mechanical shovel is, after all, only a shovel: it works just like a navvy; the only difference is in scale."

"Well, that's just the point, isn't it?"

"At present, yes. But tomorrow technique will have advanced. People are already saying that what we need is machines that work in a smooth, continuous motion. Lighter, simpler machines that don't con-

sume such an enormous amount of electricity. Soon they'll be asking for them even more insistently, you may be sure."

Now Stoletov was drawing a mechanical shovel with the arm high in the air, as light and shapely as a ship's mast. Without a look at the drawing, Kovalev rose, walked to the edge of the sand-pit and kicked a stone that lay in the grass. The stone rolled down, drawing after it a cascade of sand. A light trail of dust rose for a moment behind the stone and was at once absorbed in the air.

"It's true there are no limits in technique but there are a great many obstacles on that boundless road and not everyone is capable of overcoming them," said Kovalev as he watched the falling stone. "I, for one, am tired of fighting against obstacles. Tired. I've lost hope. I've given up."

"Do you mean to say you've lost hope in your cause?" Stoletov asked with a glance at Kovalev's broad back. "So you are quite certain that your opponents and not you were right?"

"No, I'm not," replied Kovalev, turning round to face Stoletov. "I'm right. They're not. In fact they aren't real opponents at all; you can't argue logically with them. They don't reject your ideas, but they don't accept them either. They don't refuse you anything, but they withhold their permission for you to do anything. They've dragged things out for three years. I've no strength left. I'm like a fly in a cobweb."

"Who are these 'they'?" asked Stoletov, tossing aside the twig he had been drawing with. "Haven't they got names and jobs?"

"I should say so," said Kovalev with a harsh laugh. "They've quite well-known names and rather important jobs. I'm a mere nobody compared to them. At any rate that's what they think."

"And you're prepared to accept their estimation of you?" The firm lines of Stoletov's mouth were more marked than usual. "You, an engineer and inventor, a citizen of the Soviet Union, a Communist!"

He flung the words at Kovalev as if they were spears. But Kovalev smiled, the way grown-ups smile in reply to the naive indignation of a child.

"Three years ago when I was starting the fight for my machine I thought as you do now," he said. "I thought this way: the national economy needs my machine, the people of the Soviet Union need it. It's bound to be welcomed and taken up without any difficulty, the way many other new machines are. It will be easy, I thought then. . . ."

Kovalev drew close to Stoletov. His tall, broad-shouldered figure towered over the other man and in his voice there was a note of challenge and of accusation directed against someone who had robbed him of a self-confidence that used to be his. One of his big fists was clenched and almost touched Stoletov's shoulder.

"I don't know a thing about you, Arseni Mikhailovich," said Stoletov. He grasped Kovalev's fist and drew him down beside him. "Sit down and tell me everything in the right order. . . ."

And so the two men sat side by side on the pile of logs. As the deep twilight turned into night and the stars came out, a clammy chill crept out of the woods. Stoletov's jacket was thin and he felt cold, but he remained sitting there and listened closely to Kovalev's story. Kovalev made an effort to speak calmly and concisely. It was as though he was tearing off from a mental calendar dates he recalled most easily: the first year of creative research, doubts, persevering work and the joy of

realizing that he was working on the right lines, on something useful; the second year, when the results won general recognition, a patent was issued for the invention, a prototype of the machine was built and passed its tests brilliantly; the third year of struggle to get the machine used on building sites and unheeded requests to get it sent where it could be useful. That was a difficult and very long year, difficult because promises alternated with refusals, because the recognition that had been given to his work was suddenly questioned, because of the interminable tests, exchange of letters and setting up of commissions.



"Nine of them," said Kovalev. "Nine commissions of builders and technicians, experts from head office and workers from scientific research institutes. I don't understand why it is when one commission acknowledges the unquestionable merits of the machine, another one is immediately set up. I've got copies of the findings of those commissions and can show them to you if you are interested."

Kovalev shivered: his jacket was growing damp. The night mist was rising; it had filled the deep sand-pit and was creeping round their feet. The narrow patch of grass where they sat above the sand-pit was now like a mountain-top ringed with clouds.

"That's all. Practically all. I threw up the sponge. The prototype of my machine has been pushed into a far corner of the yard. My letters and queries remain unanswered. Why should I go on writing? Let them go to hell. The work of all those years has gone down the drain, and with it something much more important than work. What's lost is lost."

Kovalev reached abruptly for his cigarette case and lit up. He inhaled deeply. The light of the cigarette cast a pink glow on his tightly closed lips and on one large hand, the hand of a worker. That hand trembled slightly and the light of the cigarette jumped in the darkness.

"I'm sorry I've been such a chatterbox," he said, rather drily. "We ought to be getting back or we'll find ourselves lost in the mist."

They walked home. They passed the birch trees which stood with long drooping boughs, still above the mist. They climbed the hill leaving the mist behind them, and warm gusts of air bearing the scent of pine fanned their faces. Scattered lights lay ahead of them—the houses and the factory where work went on day and night. Kovalev stopped at the first house.

"This is where I live," he said tersely as though repenting of his outspokenness. "Good night. And please excuse me once more for having been so talkative."

He put out his hand. As he shook it, Stoletov said:

"D'you think you could let me see everything you have on that matter? All the papers concerning your invention?"

"I could," replied Kovalev shortly. "Come indoors if you like."

They went upstairs. Kovalev opened the door of his flat with a latch-key. Only one coat hung on the wall of the small empty vestibule—Kovalev's. The flat was dark and quiet. Walking ahead, Kovalev turned on the light and entered what was apparently his study, a room with a large desk, a cupboard, a low sofa covered by a rug, and bookshelves that reached almost to the ceiling.

"Take a seat," he said, pushing an arm-chair up to the desk. "It will only take me a few moments to collect everything I have for you."

He walked over to the cupboard. Stoletov leaned over the desk; he noticed a photograph in a long wooden frame. One half of the photograph was hidden by a faded maple-leaf tucked into the edge of the frame; the other half showed the happily-smiling face of an attractive girl in her teens. On the girl's shoulder a woman's hand rested: Stoletov turned the leaf back and saw a face that was obviously that of the girl's mother, so closely did it resemble her.

"I have practically everything here," said Kovalev, laying on the desk a bulky folder. "The documented history of my ill-fated invention."

He stood waiting for Stoletov to open the folder and start looking through its contents. Stoletov, however, rose to his feet and picked up the folder.

"Would you mind if I took it home with me? I promise not to lose a single paper."

"All right," said Kovalev. "It won't make very interesting reading, I can assure you."

Out in the street, Stoletov glanced up at the darkened windows. Only one showed a light and that was Kovalev's study. What was Kovalev doing now in the flat where that overcoat hung by itself on the hall, where the corridor was haunted by a spirit of forlornness, where that woman's face lay hidden behind a faded maple-leaf? The woman's eyes bore a look of reproach. What was the reason for that look? Lack of attention? Her husband's restless temperament? His inability to get on with people? Or, perhaps, some altogether different reason. . . .

Stoletov walked on thinking about this man and his life, and thinking that from now onwards he had made Kovalev's cause his own.

Back in his own room he caught sight of an unfinished calculation about his excavator-arm lying on his desk. He pushed it aside, opened the folder and began to go through its contents systematically: the certificate registering the invention; the instructions from head office about

the necessity of making a prototype of this useful and interesting machine; reports on the machine's performance on various kinds of work; observations by building workers; an appeal from the factory to have the machine included in its plan and put into mass production. And then more papers relating to various commissions, papers that repeated each other. . . .

He read page after page. Kovalev had exaggerated nothing; the whole affair was incomprehensible. Yes, damn it all, an end had to be put to this bureaucratic mess. There could be no question of retreat, of giving in, of taking the affair lying down.

Who could he enlist in the campaign for the new excavator? Who would speak up for a machine which undoubtedly ought to be made? The man he needed was some leading expert on excavators, one of the top people at head office, perhaps, whose opinion would have weight at the Ministry. That was the kind of man he ought to write to and ask to take an interest in the matter.

Kovalev's mistake was that he had tried to fight on his own, thought Stoletov. But he himself would recruit people to champion the machine wherever he could find them. Then no one would dare to wash his hands of it.

He wrote a long detailed letter that explained everything clearly:

"I ask you very earnestly, Nikolai Mikhailovich, to look into this matter and find a way out of this confused situation. Anticipating your assistance, I remain gratefully yours. . . ."

It was nearly dawn when he finished the letter. Putting all the papers back into the folder, Stoletov addressed an envelope and early in the morning took the letter to the post-office.

There was good news for him there.

"There's a telegram for you, Comrade Stoletov. A letter too," said the girl clerk to whom he handed the letter for registration. "I'll give them to you now, if you don't mind. We haven't sent this morning's post to your office yet."

Stoletov took the letter and telegram and opened them. The letter was from his sons and consisted of two sheets covered with regular rounded handwriting; the telegram was from a graduate of Moscow University applying for work at the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory. Stoletov gave the telegram a rapid glance, put it away in his pocket and started to read the letter.

His sons' letters were very much alike.

"Dear Daddy, How are you? I am well only I want to see you soon." Both Ivan and Demyan started the same way. Then came news about family affairs, about how it would soon be end of term and hols, but Mummy would still be working, and that was why they would not be able to leave for Verkhnyaya Kamenka at once. "We asked Mummy to let us go with Grandad but she said we will all go together," wrote Vanya. "Grandad asked Mummy to let us go with him but she didn't want it and Grandad got angry," announced Demyan. Then they told him their school marks, sent him kisses and greetings and promises to come and see him soon—all word for word the same as if the boys had copied each other.

Stoletov smilingly reread the letters, picturing clearly the little faces of his sons who resembled each other so much, and thinking that it was

high time that he moved out of the hotel into the flat that was waiting for him.

He decided to lose no time in taking a look at the place and felt in his pocket for the key that the head of the housing department had given him a few days before.

He knew that the house in which his flat was situated stood on the far edge of the new settlement quite near the woods. In his opinion this neighbourhood was the prettiest: it consisted of fairly small brick houses built on the hillside among tall pines which had been preserved together with the undergrowth. The grass was already showing green in the glades between the trees, and bees and butterflies were busy around the yellowing tassels of the pussy willows. Here it was much quieter than on the main street with its tall buildings. Stoletov felt sure that Varya would like the place; it looked more like a holiday resort than a factory housing estate.

He would move that very day, he decided, when he saw the two large well-lit rooms. It was certainly time he started making the place habitable.

When he returned to the factory, he felt himself at home for the first time since he had arrived. He had his flat which he would arrange just as it suited him. His family was going to join him: Varya and the boys and Varya's father—the nearest and dearest people he had in life. They would be waiting for him when he came back from work every evening. He would have to bring Varya and Yelena Protasova together and introduce her to Kovalev and to Budanov's wife, so that she would not find life too dull and be left on her own too much. Then he ought to buy bicycles for the boys—there were such pretty little paths running from the house to the woods. . . .

All the way to the factory he thought about Varya and the children, how he would meet them and how he would try to make everything as comfortable and pleasant as possible. As he slipped off his coat in his office, his nose caught the smell of paint that clung to his clothes. It must be from the flat, he thought, and made a mental note that he would have to give the place a good airing before the family turned up.

Fancy the boys wanting to come on their own! Bright lads! he thought. As he took their letters from his pocket again, the telegram fluttered to the floor. He picked it up and read:

"Graduated with honours Moscow University. Party member since 1952. Desire work your factory on newspaper. Request your agreement. Andrei Korolev."

There was certainly room for someone in that job. A new editor who could turn those dull useless pages into a militant, bright, intelligent paper. A real man who could help him and work with him. Not a Chumov whose statement lay there on his desk untouched.

Stoletov had appealed to the regional committee of the Communist Party several times for a new editor to be sent to Verkhnyaya Kamenka as a replacement for Chumov. But he was told that there was no one available at present for the post and that it was up to the Communist Party organization of the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory to get rid of Chumov. That organization, however, had plenty of things to worry about besides Chumov. What was more, nobody very much wanted to mix himself up with Chumov.

"To hell with the fellow," Budanov said candidly when Stoletov went

to him for advice. "He'll worry the life out of us with complaints. Say he was sacked for expressing his opinion."

"Let him," said Stoletov. "Why should that worry us?"

"Only that it would mean having to answer those charges at forty different levels. I've had to write a heap of such explanations as it is and I'm fed up with doing it. I agree that the paper's no good whatsoever. But don't ask me to do anything about Chumov. No, thank you, I'll save my nerves for another occasion."

The other members of the bureau were of the same opinion. Syurtukov was the only one who said that he would be delighted to shoot Chumov with any old gun but didn't feel like serving a prison sentence for it afterwards. . . . But there was no doubt the fellow ought to be got rid of. Really got rid of and not moved to another post of responsibility or sent off to a study course. That way of doing things was still in fashion: they sacked a scoundrel whom everybody was sick to death of and put him to study. As if a course of lectures could turn a scoundrel into an angel. Oh no, you can't make a leopard change his spots. . . . Chumov was a malicious slanderer and he would stay one even if he acquired all the learning in the world. . . .

Now as he read the telegram, Stoletov recalled Syurtukov's furious face and smiled. He could rely on one man. Syurtukov was not afraid of slander and complaints.

"Connect with the town, please," he said into his telephone. "I want the press department of the regional committee of the Communist Party."

The receiver croaked and crackled; distant voices reeled off some incomprehensible list; one despairing voice that was louder than the others called: "Where's that cement? Cement, I say. What, you can't hear? Cement."

That must be Koryakov, thought Stoletov; blocking the town line with his cement.

But apparently Koryakov was not on the town line; the voice of the head of the press department drowned the blurred remote conversations.

"Good morning," said Stoletov. "I've had a telegram. I'll read it to you." Then he added: "I think we ought to send for this chap to replace Chumov. Have I your blessing?"

"Get rid of Chumov first."

"We'll get rid of him, don't you worry. We'll raise the matter at the next bureau meeting. It'll be carried unanimously, I'm sure of that."

"That would be good. But what are we going to do with him?"

"That's your affair," said Stoletov unkindly. "Send him wherever you like but the farther from us the better. I am going to send this Koro-lev a wire telling him to come."

Chapter Three

1

The railway journey seemed endless. For the third day the express in which Nikolai and Andrei were travelling had been speeding eastward from Moscow. Their travelling companions changed, unfamiliar towns showed in the window of their compartment and disappeared, bridges that

spanned wide rivers boomed under the wheels of the railway-carriage and then at length they saw in the distance the first foothills of the Urals Mountains.

"Look, mountains," Andrei cried excitedly. "Don't they look fine! We'll soon be there."

Nikolai went to the window with silent unconcern. He looked diffidently at the mountains that were bathed in the light of the newly-risen sun; but they held no beauty for him. Before his eyes shimmered the face of Nina, always Nina, one moment mocking and bewildering, the next tender and inviting.

Nina had come to see him off. She was wearing a white frock and carried a big bunch of flowers which she handed not to Nikolai but to Andrei—making Andrei, who was wearing a new suit and that dark blue hat, look like an actor on tour.

Nina stood among the boys who had come to see them off, and made no attempt to approach Nikolai. Then, when the train was already moving and Andrei, flowers in hand, jumped in last, Nikolai saw that Nina was waving her handkerchief and looking at him with an unnatural strained smile on her face.

How strange that smile had been. . . . Nikolai clearly saw the platform slipping past, Nina, the lads from the college, Boris Ivanovich and, among them all, his mother who stood a little apart from the others, looking frail and old. The hair that lay smoothed on her head was quite white, her cheeks were hollow, her expression dejected. She did not wave; she just watched with sad eyes that seemed to be full of tears.

During those last minutes before the train had pulled out, Nikolai had been thinking only about Nina; he had quite overlooked the fact that he was parting from his mother too. He had had no real talk with her, had not even said good-bye properly. And though she had not reproached him or demanded any attention from him she must have felt hurt and even have shed a few tears on the quiet.

Well, what did you leave behind in Moscow, Nikolai Nikolayevich Zhukov? A fond mother whose feelings you've hurt and a maiden you love but have not been able to tell her so. . . .

"Hey, you day-dreamer. Look up the line, I think that's our station ahead."

Andrei hung out of the window. The wind ruffled his hair; his face, which had grown sun-tanned during the three days in the train, expressed sheer happiness unclouded by doubts or longings. Glancing at Nikolai, he nudged him with his shoulder and made him look out of the carriage. The line humped up in an arc, the steel rails gleamed, from the engine streamed a cloud of vapour that glowed pink in the beams of the rising sun. A town moved from behind the hills towards the train.

"We're there," said Andrei. "Let's go and get our luggage."

Their journey nearly over, Nikolai and Andrei stood on the sun-flooded square waiting for the bus to the factory. They were in the heart of a large, unfamiliar, noisy town. With its bell ringing shrilly, a tram dashed along the hilly street; a trolley-bus, pompous and packed, glided past. Just like in Moscow. The buses, on the other hand, were unlike the Moscow sort—they were small, high and painted blue. They left a termi-

nus where the names of their destinations were written up—places lying far from the railway.

On a post near where Nikolai and Andrei stood, hung a small sign: "Verkhnyaya Kamenka, Belozersk, Vorotilino." Below it was the timetable.

"I say, it's hot," said Andrei, wiping his damp brow. "Definitely tropical. That's the Urals for you."

He cast envious looks at the passers-by in their light summer clothes; at the girls with their sun-burned faces, bare-legged and wearing open-necked frocks. There was a southern look about everything, in that gaily-dressed crowd, in the unfamiliar trees lining the public garden, in the bright blue, utterly cloudless sky.

At last the bus came, as small and high as the others, though, perhaps, more scratched and faded. They were the first in; shoving their hand luggage under the seat, they took off their hats and macks. The bus shot off with a jerk, bounded over the tram lines, cut across the square and made its way up a street that climbed steeply.

They rode on through the outskirts, leaving the town to one side. From a long way off they could still see the pale grey cubes of its tall buildings, an occasional factory with smoking chimney-stacks, a tree-lined avenue running down the hillside. A blinding glimpse of a river under a small wooden bridge, and they were running past small old cottages built of dark, almost black timbers.

Then came a long street of new standard houses enclosed by neat railings without a single shrub growing behind them. Past the houses the bus ran for some time beside a wall. There were several aeroplanes in a field, a big hangar on the far side, and a white airport building surrounded by saplings. The building was light and pleasant with something about it that suggested flight, a suitable place for seeing people off on plane-journeys.

The bus stopped; into it an old woman with a dark woollen shawl round her shoulders heaved herself, followed by a young woman with a basket and a suitcase, then a young man carrying a baby. The baby was squawking loudly; the young man drew it close to his chest and looked furiously at the young woman.

"You're late," said the young woman to the girl conductor. "We've been waiting and waiting. . . . Don't seem to be keeping to your schedule, are you?"

She dumped her things down in the middle of the bus, chose a seat, smoothed her dress and fanned herself with a handkerchief.

"It's as hot as in the Ukraine."

"Where have you been to?" asked the conductor as she gave out the tickets. "Many's the time I've looked for my jolliest passenger."

"We went to stay with an aunt and from there we went to the Crimea for a holiday on the Black Sea," the woman replied, nodding towards the young man with the baby. "His aunt's, I should say. He took me there to meet her."

"Here, take the baby," the young man mumbled irritably without looking up. "Can't you hear the way he's hollering?"

"And is that a reason why I should take him? Hold him yourself or give him to Mum. . . . Come on, Mum, take him, he's pining for you."

Andrei had long given up looking out of the window and was watching

the new passengers. The young woman was giving the conductor an animated account of the amount of cherries she had eaten in the Ukraine: ("A bucketful every day, believe it or not"); what flying in an aeroplane was like: ("Really like being in a bus except when you're flying over the mountains and drop into an air-pocket it tears the heart out of you").

The baby grew quiet. With a sly look at her husband the woman said: "Hand me the lad, you must be fair tired of holding him."

The young man turned away and said nothing. Then the woman stepped over her basket, sat down beside her husband and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Visiting's all right, but it's nice to be home, isn't it?" she cooed. "Are you glad we're back?"

The young man said something to her too quietly for Andrei to catch.

The bus came out into open country. Now the road followed the course of a narrow river. On one side rose mountains covered with pine forest, on the other, there were more mountains with grass growing on the lower slopes and shrubs and trees higher up.

The mountains held the eye with an irresistible power. There were places where the dense coat of green, as thick as bear fur, was gashed by a straight cutting as if some giant's knife had been drawn across the ridge of the mountains. Here and there, near the foot, little groups of cottages lay among the trees. How good life must be here! And now they were passing a place where a grove of tall birches stretched from the woods to the edge of the road.

"Look, have you ever seen birches like those before?" asked Andrei, pointing to groups of trees whose trunks rose together from the ground. "Quick, or you'll miss them."

"Birches. Yes. They're pretty. But look over there. Aren't we coming to another town?"

Across the river they could see the faint, distant outlines of some buildings. Against the background of mountains the buildings looked very white; there were many of them gleaming in the sun and beyond them several tall smoke-stacks.

"What's that place?" Andrei asked eagerly. "What's the name of that town, comrade conductor?"

"That's no town, that's Verkhnyaya Kamenka. We left the town an hour ago."

"It's our factory, Nik."

They leaned out of the window but the road made a turn and the factory slid out of sight behind a low bare hill. Near this hill they saw houses, a few at first, scattered like the cottages of a hamlet, then lining a road. The houses looked very old; their shutters were carved and the blackened fences stood askew. Here and there shutters had been given a fresh coat of paint; they looked like patches of new cloth on a worn-out garment.

But among these cottages suddenly arose high brick buildings obviously of quite recent construction.

"School," said the conductor when the bus stopped near one of these buildings.

"District Soviet," she announced at the next stop.

The miraculous vision of the snow-white town faded. Then from far

off swam into sight an old timber-built fire-watching tower and beyond it a stone church with its cupola in ruins. The young man with the baby stood up, handed his charge to his wife and dragged the suitcase and basket to the exit.

"Well, here we are again," said the old woman. "Thank you for bringing us, lass."

The bus stopped; Nikolai and Andrei picked up their things and got out into the glare of the dusty road.

"How do we get from here to the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory, please?" Andrei asked the young woman who was watching her husband shoulder the luggage. "Is it far?"

"For some it is but not for us," she replied cryptically with a quizzical look at Andrei. "What's brought you here? Business?"

"We've come to work here."

"Really. Young engineers, I suppose..." she said, her interest aroused. "D'you hear that, Vasya? They've come to work here with us. They'll not manage to get their luggage there. We'll give it to Klava to look after with ours." She at once started to issue her instructions: "You take the kid, Mum, and wait here with him in the shade. You take this suitcase, young man, and you the other one. I'll carry the kit-bag. Come along with me. It's easy to lose your way when you come to a new place, of course. Specially here. Koryakov can't arrange to get a bus running to the factory. It's torture. The bus dumps you down here and you've got to walk the rest of the way. Don't worry though, we'll get there all right. It's less than five kilometres and we can come for the luggage later on in a lorry or ask the management for a bus."

She walked to a cottage which a sign showed to be the bus station and boldly flung open the front door. Behind a table near a low window a young girl sat reading a book. She did not look up when the door creaked but merely placed a finger on a page that the draught threatened to turn over.

"Wake up, Klava, you bookworm. It's me," called the young woman from the door. "I've brought visitors."

The girl raised her head, looked round with dreamy eyes and said calmly.

"Oh, it's you, Dusya."

Then her eyes brightened and she jumped up.

"Why, Dusya dear, where have you been? I haven't seen you for over a month."

"We've been on holiday in the Ukraine. We got into a plane one night and by morning we were there. By the way, we had to wait ages for your old charabanc. I'll come later and tell you all about the times we had, but now take our luggage. This is mine and the other one belongs to these young men. They've come to work at our factory. You know what our Koryakov is. D'you think he'd take the trouble to have anyone meet them? Not he! We'll come this evening for the luggage."

She took command in the bus station as if she was in her own house, and showed her husband and the two young men where to put the luggage.

"Keep an eye on these things," she said. "When you get your head buried in a book, anybody could walk off with them."

Andrei and Nikolai were delighted by their fellow-traveller.

"I'm Andrei Korolev," Andrei told her when they were outside again. "And this is my friend Nikolai Zhukov."

"My name is Dusya," announced the young woman. "This is my husband Vasya Gorlinka, and this is my mother Yelizaveta Ivanovna Syurtukova. My name is Syurtukova, too, because I didn't take my husband's name, me being known as Syurtukova not only in the factory but beyond, too."

"Stop your boasting," said her mother. "Vasya's as well known as you."

"All the worse. Who'd know which Gorlinka was meant when they talked about one of us?"

She did not relieve her mother of the baby but walked on swinging a smart patent-leather bag. They left the highway for a dusty side road.

"Just look at the road," said Dusya. "Can't put a decent surface on it. In autumn a horse could drown on this road before there was time to drag it out of the mud. It's all Koryakov's fault. He doesn't do a thing about the road. Let's take the foot-path; it's farther but it's not dusty."

She led them off the road towards the river. At first the narrow path plunged into the scrub. Tall dry grass grew among the alder bushes. Then it came out on the river bank. Here the river widened and turned into a large lake. On the other side of the lake rose the blue ridge of the mountains clothed in woods, their dark sloping mass spread against the dazzling azure of the sky. Their reflection in the lake made the water seem almost black.

But on the near side the water was bright and transparent as that of a mountain stream. It gently lapped the sandy shore of the lake, the big jagged rocks, the roots of the pines that were exposed on the eroded bank. It glittered in the sunshine, it hissed with the stir of the sand and below it could be clearly seen the sloping bed of the lake, white sand and stones as jagged as those on the bank.

Sometimes the path wound along the bank, then it would slope steeply up to curve round some huge boulder jutting into the lake. Up above there were glades between the trees, where the grass was green and the flowers grew abundantly: big, brightly-hued unfamiliar flowers swayed on long stalks. Over the flowers circled butterflies that matched them in brightness.

"This path runs on to the Park of Culture," said Dusya. "We have to turn off here back to the road to get to the house where we live."

The road ran through a deep cutting with sides that looked as if they had been gnawed away. From here could be seen the factory and those white buildings that Andrei and Nikolai had admired from the bus. The buildings were really white and attractive but from near at hand everything looked different: the houses stood far apart, separated by empty lots with piles of building materials: there were no roads or pavements or, in fact, anything in the way of a street—everything had an unfinished look about it. The bare upturned earth, the planks, the hastily flung-together fences, the incomplete brick building that stood in scaffolding at the end of the track—all had a provisional look about it as if it had but just come into existence on this baking hot, dusty, and utterly barren hill.

"There's our factory," said Dusya with considerable pride. "And there's the factory housing estate. We've arrived. You'll have to keep straight on to that half-finished building over there. We turn right here to the old village. Good-bye for the present."



They were just about to part when Vasya Gorlinka suddenly spoke for the first time since the bus stop.

"D'you happen to be coming to work in the foundry? We're short of technicians there."

"No," said Nikolai. "I'm for the machine shop or, maybe, the designing department or the chief technologist's office."

"You come to the machine shop," put in Dusya. "It's the best shop in the factory. The building's fine. It's wonderfully fitted up. We've a good manager, too. Don't forget—the first machine shop."

"D'you work there?"

"Of course I do. Just ask for Dusya of the electric welders. Anybody will tell you where to find me. I'll be at work tomorrow, so we'll meet."

They took their leave of each other and Andrei and Nikolai walked on. A huge tip-lorry overtook them, throwing up a cloud of dust and petrol fumes. Somewhere a little shunting engine whistled shrilly, and from behind a new apartment house with decorative white balconies on its front crept several goods wagons loaded with metal girders. The engine whistled once more and a high crane that stuck up behind a wooden fence came to life and swung its jib till it stopped over the wagons.

The road finished in a broad asphalted square in the centre of which was a public garden with small flower beds. Round the garden ran blue railings with boards bearing the portraits of the best workers in the factory.

"One day your picture will be up there," said Andrei, nudging Nikolai in the ribs. "But mine will never go up, however hard I try."

Nikolai did not reply. Deeply stirred, he was staring at the wide-open gates of the factory. Beyond them ran an asphalted road, with an even line of shops so new that their bricks were still light pink in colour. There were many of these shops with wide windows shining in the sun; people kept coming out of them and hurrying off somewhere. Then the factory gates closed and the factory yard was seen no more.

On one side of the square stood a two-storey brick building. White curtains hung in its small windows; vases of flowers could be seen. Music from Moscow was coming through a loud-speaker on the roof. A short flight of cement steps ran up to two identical doors that were padded and

covered with black oilcloth. On one of them hung a notice: "Factory Management," on the other "Factory Party Bureau."

Andrei and Nikolai stopped before these doors. Their hearts beat faster. This was their journey's end. What lay ahead of them? What sort of reception would they get? How were they going to get on as members of the vast collective that worked within these walls, beyond the high iron gates?

"Well, this is where we part for the time being," said Andrei. "You go in there," he nodded to the door of the management office—"and I go this way into the Party bureau. . . . Good luck, old man. Don't be nervous."

"Me nervous?" Nikolai quavered. "Don't you worry."

2

The process of removing Chumov from his post as editor of *Tribuna* went quite smoothly. Every member of the Communist Party bureau said his word, and every one of them had serious complaints: the paper was not read in the shops, advanced workers did not contribute to it and it failed altogether to live up to its name.

"It's not a tribune that a leading worker can use, it's Chumov's private tribune," said Lepikhin. "He uses it to sow feuds, to set people against each other, to launch all kinds of vague dirty rumours and hints. In my opinion we ought to remove Chumov from his post as unworthy of our confidence."

"Kick him out and let the Party reprimand him," suggested Budanov. "He should be forbidden to work for the press again."

Stoletov wondered as he listened to all these statements: what had these bureau members been doing all this time? Why, if Chumov was so unreliable, hadn't they got rid of him long before? When he mentioned this, Budanov replied.

"The force of inertia, Comrade Stoletov, that's what it was. There was a time when we did try to get rid of Chumov but then some members of the regional committee of the Party defended him. Chumov hung on to the job like a tick and it wasn't so easy to root him out. That's what happened. . . . Of course, it doesn't do the members of the bureau credit but it does, to some extent, explain the situation."

"Maybe Comrade Chumov had better be sent on a course of study," ventured Poteryayev, a pattern-maker. "We must take into account that the Party organization did not help him."

Chumov, who had been sitting in a corner sweating with anxiety, looked at Poteryayev with eyes full of hope. A study course? That was just what he wanted: a year or two in Moscow with a stipend, opportunities of meeting people on the staff of the central newspapers, and then—promotion, say, to a correspondent's job on a regional newspaper. Then you'd better look out, Verkhnyaya Kamenka. He'd remind them of today's meeting.

All the time Chumov had been jotting down an enormous number of useful facts. Stoletov, for instance, had made Chumov's secret report public to all, describing it as a concoction of slanderous statements and delirious ravings. That deserved noting: he had revealed the contents of a

document that he was warned to keep secret, he had defamed material collected by an honourable Communist. Then the secretary of a shop Party organization had asked for the closing-down of the factory newspaper, the organ of the Party bureau and the factory committee, and what does the Party organizer who is responsible to the Central Committee do but listen to this anti-Party statement with a smile? He would remember that smile one day.

Chumov's pencil slid over the pages of his notebook. He mustn't miss anything, he had to get everything down, every word. . . . What was it Lepikhin had said? "The factory newspaper is a medium for settling personal accounts?" Perhaps he put it a little differently but that didn't matter, no official verbatim record was being taken of the proceedings. Interesting to hear what Lepikhin would have to say when faced with the charge of having slandered a newspaper.

"Will all those in favour raise their hands, please?" said Stoletov. "All those against. Any abstentions? The following motion is carried unanimously: Comrade Chumov is to be relieved of his responsibilities as editor; the regional Party committee is to be asked not to make any further use of Chumov as a journalist."

While Stoletov was slowly dictating the text of the resolution, Syurtukov went on raising a din and calling for a motion to be put to the vote that Chumov should be called to account as a Party member. But the other members of the bureau were apparently so glad to have got rid of Chumov that they obliged Syurtukov to shut up.

"You'll be sorry one day that you left a Party card in such dirty hands," muttered Syurtukov. "Please make a note of my personal opinion: that we should discuss whether he should be allowed to remain in the Party."

"We've taken the vote, Comrade Syurtukov," Stoletov interjected. "The motion was carried unanimously. You voted for it yourself." Then, turning to Chumov, "You heard the resolution. Do you accept what it says?"

"Of course not. I consider it to be a case of suppression of criticism. I shall lodge an appeal against it."

"That you have the right to do," said Stoletov wearily. "Meanwhile, hand over your job to Comrade Poperechny. You may go."

Chumov rose, picked up his notebook and the other papers that lay before him and stuffed them into his letter-case. He took his time over it. Everybody watched him without proceeding to the next item on the agenda. At length, darting angry looks at the members of the bureau, Chumov walked slowly to the door. It was his intention to cut a dignified figure but he did not notice that the strap of his letter-case trailed behind him like a tail.

"We've hounded the rat out of his nest," said Stoletov when the door closed behind Chumov. "But look out, comrades, he'll worry the life out of you in all sorts of committees."

"Oh, we're used to that," said Budanov. "I've addressed sixteen committees on account of his statements already. All in writing. I can pass on my experience to you—the first time you take it to heart and worry about it, then you get angry and protest, and in the long run you write calmly and collectedly."

"Let's have a breather, Stepan Demyanovich," said Syurtukov who

had noticed that Stoletov was ready to proceed with the next item. "It's time for a bite. We've been at it for over two hours."

Stoletov agreed and announced a half-hour break. The bureau members went their ways; only Budanov remained, for he had something to discuss with Stoletov alone. But they did not succeed in starting; Lyuba Zvonaryeva burst into the room, excited, red in the face and tearful. She was still sobbing when she sat down beside the desk; her cheeks were tear-stained, her nose swollen, and the girl who was usually so pretty and self-assured, had turned into a little girl whom someone had offended.

"I can't go on," she sobbed. "There are so many men in the factory. . . . I can't manage them. . . . Let me go. Make somebody else secretary. I'll go back to the lab. You'll have to give the post to a man."

They looked at the girl with astonishment; they had always considered her such a fighter and here all of a sudden was this faint-heart.

"Now, now, calm yourself. Have a glass of water," said Budanov. "Somebody else may come in, you know. . . ."

Lyuba Zvonaryeva had not been secretary of the Comsomol committee for long. When she entered the factory two years before, after studying at a technical school, she started in the laboratory of the foundry department. She was popular from the start. She was certainly a first-rate worker. Even the jaundiced lab manager had to concede that Zvonaryeva's analyses were always dead accurate, that she did not grudge time re-checking any doubtful test, that she was zealous in the pursuit of knowledge and that she read a great number of technical books on her subject.

Besides that, Lyuba was active in social work. . . . She had a bold manner and a caustic tongue, was not afraid of speaking in public, did with ardour everything that was assigned to her and, when elections to the Comsomol committee came round, was at the head of the poll. She flung herself passionately into Comsomol work, demanding from the other factory organizations their constant attention to the interests of young people and raising a storm whenever she felt this attention to be inadequate.

Lyuba often came to see Stoletov. She had been waiting impatiently for the break in the bureau meeting that morning.

"Last night the whole hostel in the old village went on the spree," she said through her sobs. "I tried to break it up but not one of the older people helped me. What could I do on my own? They were fighting; one of the moulders got his hand broken. He was sent to hospital today."

"Is he in the Comsomol?" Budanov enquired.

"Yes. What of it?"

"Well, you're responsible for what happened, aren't you?" Budanov retorted hotly. "Oh, it's no good your looking as if you didn't care. Don't you think the event is pretty extraordinary?"

"I do. Otherwise I wouldn't be here. . . ."

She turned away from Budanov and suddenly caught sight through the window of a number of lads in trainee uniform standing about in the yard keenly discussing something. They were not, in fact, trainees; they had left the training school a year before but were still wearing their uniforms. What were they fooling about there for during working hours? If Budanov happened to glance out of the window too, he was bound to ask her that. He wouldn't look, though. He was sitting at the table. He couldn't see them from there.

But Budanov did see them. He rose to his feet and looked out of the window.

"What are those lads doing out there?" he asked. "The dinner-time hooter hasn't gone, has it?"

"It hasn't," said Lyuba. "Perhaps they worked on the night shift, though."

"Then what are they doing in the factory? Oh no, they're not on night shift. They've merely slipped out of the shop to bask in the sun."

Some men walked past the boys. None of them stopped to ask why they were fooling about in the yard. Budanov leaned out of the window and shouted:

"What's the meeting going on there! It's about time you finished your palaver, isn't it?"

The lads scattered in all directions.

"See that?" Budanov triumphed with a derisive look at Lyuba. "They're not on night shift."

"I saw. But what can I do about it? Why don't the foremen keep an eye on them? Poor sort of foremen they are to let their workers gad about with nothing to do. Do you want to hold me responsible for the entire factory? You might at least look after the hostels—isn't that the management's business? Things aren't so good there, you know."

"The management furnished those hostels like sanatoriums," said Budanov. "Carpets, mirrors, spring mattresses. . . ."

"Carpets! Yes, there are carpets. But who looks after the hostels? And what about the hostel wardens? Who have you given that job to? In that hostel where the fighting went on last night the warden himself was boozing with the boys. We warned you what to expect but you left him in the job. . . . I went there yesterday. I was going to appeal to his conscience. But d'you think he helped me? He just sat and smirked when Yasha Milovidov got fresh with me. . . . I left the place and sent a militiaman there—I met one on the road. No, it's no good, you need a man for the job. I'll go back to the lab."

"Who is the warden at that hostel?" Stoletov asked. "We must get rid of him at once."

His grave, frowning glance at Budanov demanded an answer. Budanov, however, averted his eyes and said grudgingly that he did not know who the warden was and had no idea who could be sent to replace him.

"It wouldn't hurt the Comsomol to think about how to provide young workers with some counter-attraction to drink," he added. "The question isn't going to be settled merely by sacking the warden."

"Stop the sale of vodka, then," said Lyuba. "There are three booths out there near the factory gates. What do you think they sell there? Vodka and beer. The boys come out of the factory with their pay in their pockets. Come on, out with it, why walk any farther for a drink? There's only one thing to do: stop the sale of vodka here."

"As for these booths, you're right; we'll stop them selling vodka," said Stoletov. "They can sell lemonade and soft drinks. You show initiative; you can always count on us to support it if it's good."

Lyuba, her tearful look turned to one of anger, tidied her hair which was combed high over her smooth forehead; she dabbed at her flushed face with a tiny handkerchief and waited impatiently for Stoletov to finish what he had to say so that she could fling herself into the fray again.

"Oh, of course, initiative's a splendid thing," she said caustically. "But who is supposed to support that initiative? The Party organization and the factory management, aren't they? I've been Comsomol secretary for how long and there's been no lack of initiative with us, but nobody's given us any help and we've only done a tenth of what we could have done. Hundreds of times we were given promises, and resolutions were made, and the bureau listened to what we had to say. And what was the result? Precisely nil."

"That's bad. You should have been helped. We'll try and do better in future," said Stoletov. "Let's come to an agreement. No more tears; we'll keep those for something else. No getting panicky about every brawl. Of course brawling's a bad thing but the important thing to know is what causes it. Why is it, Lyuba, that there are still young people who go in for playing cards all night and getting tight and scrapping? Can you tell me that?"

"It's because they're bored."

"Bored? That's impossible. How can you be young and bored? I'm not young but I never get bored."

"You don't, but they do."

There was defiance in the retort.

"Well, well, think of that," said Stoletov, shaking his head. "Boredom. What a dreadful thing. Are there so few interesting things for a man to do? Fishing, for instance. Or hunting. Or reading a good book. And what about dancing with a pretty girl? Or joining the drama circle? There's an endless number of interesting things to do in the world."

"Oh, there are some who go in for dancing or hunting or playing in the band. But it's not everybody. Some find it interesting but others get bored. For them we've got to find something specially interesting."

"We've got lads of all sorts," said Budanov. "Take Sharov, the foreman. You can consider him among the youngsters, can't you? He's only twenty-two, not long out of technical school. He's never bored. Not he! The day's never long enough for him; he's always on the hop, always busy with something. He goes in for rowing and skiing and hunting, too; and he likes to dance. But then there's Yasha Milovidov. He knows his job all right, that bright lad does. But do you think he makes a good thing of his life? Not he. For Yasha life's just drinking and brawling and beating up his wife. But why, God only knows. The Comsomol doesn't teach him anything."

"I refuse to teach Yasha Milovidov anything," cried Lyuba, her cheeks ablaze. "Let the militia do the teaching."

"You're wrong," said Stoletov. "He doesn't refuse to teach others himself, you know. He started on that turner of yours, Nazarenko. They used to go to restaurants and play the fool together. Luckily Nazarenko got interested in playing the trombone—and the trombone won. There are others who don't find counter-attractions and then Yasha proves the stronger. Before he gets into the hands of the militia he'll have taught no few Comsomol members his own ways. Life, you know, doesn't run so smoothly for everyone; not always according to the book or the plan. In real life we can't afford to refuse to fight those who hinder us from living and working. Only cowards refuse to fight and I don't think Lyuba Zvonaryeva is a coward, is she?"

Lyuba was going to say: "No, I'm no coward," when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," called Stoletov.

A tall good-looking young man wearing a blue hat and a well-cut suit strode into the room.

"I'm looking for Comrade Stoletov," he said, glancing from Budanov to Stoletov.

"I'm Stoletov. What do you want?"

"I came from Moscow at your request. To work on the factory newspaper."

Chapter Four

1

The shop manager looked Nikolai over with appraising eyes and fired quick, short questions at him: Where had he studied? Had he worked at any other factory? Where and with whom? Nikolai tried to make his answers sound calm and self-confident; as if two engineering colleagues were having a talk, one young, the other rather older—just talking over some serious matter concerning their work. That meant being careful not to behave like a student in the presence of a professor. Let the shop manager understand from the beginning that he was not dealing with a mere lad but with a man who had seen something of life.

"D'you think you'd manage the job if we put you in charge of a turnery?" the shop manager asked him. "The present foreman has to go to another job."

Nikolai took fright, and was about to ask for a less responsible post when he remembered that degree of his.

"I'll have a shot at it," he said huskily.

"That's the spirit. Come and have a look over the section. I'll send for the foreman straight away; he'll show you the ropes."

Nikolai was expecting to see a solid, practical man who was being removed so that the turnery could be strengthened by the presence of a foreman with higher education. He anticipated a certain feeling of embarrassment in meeting this old fellow who was making way for him, and wondered how he could soften the blow.

Perhaps he would do better to turn down the job of foreman and ask to work instead as the old fellow's assistant. He would teach him in the evenings and help him to grasp the technical knowledge he lacked.

Nikolai imagined them studying together somewhere in the factory library or at the old worker's house. And he looked quite indifferently at the young man in dark overalls who came into the manager's office.

"Let me introduce you," said the manager, turning to Nikolai. "Here's your replacement, Sharov. Now you'll be able to transfer to the third shop."

The young man shook hands joyfully with the embarrassed Nikolai and asked his chief how many days he would give him to hand over the section. Then he led Nikolai into the shop.

"You studied in Moscow, didn't you?" he began, the moment they left the office. "I was at Sverdlovsk. At the machine-building technical school. I've been here a year and had four months in this shop. From the time it was opened. There's a new shop starting now. That's where I'm

going. . . . It's going to turn out mining equipment and that's something I'm specially interested in."

"And what do we make here?"

"Depends on the order. The place hasn't settled down to any special line yet. One thing today and another tomorrow."

As they walked through the shop, Nikolai looked anxiously into every corner. The large high-roofed shop looked rather empty and half-built. Perhaps that was because of the unplastered brick walls, or because there seemed to be so few machines in the place: they were all placed together near the windows, leaving the middle of the shop quite free. Anyway, Nikolai's first impression of the shop was not a favourable one.

"I was told this was the best shop."

"You were told right, but we've got another machine shop opening. It's just been built. Everything there has to be organized from scratch. That's why I'm being sent there. As an old experienced worker."

Sharov spoke in all seriousness, without the hint of a smile; Nikolai stole a glance at him. His companion had not the least resemblance to an "old experienced worker"—he was a rather lean young man of no great height wearing oil-stained overalls and a cap with a button on the top, tilted over one ear. From under the peak protruded a thick lock of hair that was much lighter than the sun-burned face; there was a bold look in the grey eyes below his fair brows. The chap was his own age, even a bit younger, perhaps. Yet he was being entrusted with the organization of a new workshop.

This thought comforted Nikolai. Till then everybody Nikolai had walked past seemed to be looking back at him with an air of derision—just look what a youngster has been appointed foreman! Now he felt encouraged, more self-assured.

By the time he reached his future section he had a confident air and was trying to show that there was nothing new to him in what he saw there. He paid little heed to the words of his companion when Sharov stopped at various lathes and praised them for their accuracy and for other fine qualities.

"I know them," he said offhandedly. "I took my practical courses last year in a factory that made lathes like these. But at that time they were designing a new lathe, much more powerful and capable of being run much faster."

He wanted to show Sharov that he had seen factories and shops that were as good as this one, and that there was not the least justification for treating him as a novice to be taken round on a sight-seeing tour. His reference to the new lathe made a deep impression on Sharov. He at once drew Nikolai to his desk and asked him whether such lathes were going to be in production soon. Did he think it possible that the new shop might get some of those very lathes? What changes and improvements in design would there be?

Nikolai was not able to answer all his questions. He knew nothing about the lathe's performance, for he had taken his practical course in the chief mechanic's department and it was only from what he had heard at a production conference that he knew the designing bureau was working on that new lathe.

"I don't think the lathe is in mass production yet, so it is unlikely

that you'll get them soon," he said haltingly. "The designers were only working on the blue prints at that time."

"But that was last year! Why, a good twelve months have passed since then. They must have got on with it."

Nikolai had to admit that during that year he had not been near the factory and that he knew nothing of the fate of the lathe. He conscientiously tried to recall everything he had heard about the lathe but that did not amount to much.

"With the old type of lathe the rotation speed is limited. Well, in the new lathe the idea is to have a lot of speed in reserve. At the present time we can't use such high speeds; we haven't got suitable cutting-tools and so forth. But if those tools turn up, if we find a cutting material that will stand up to super-speed work, then the lathe will be able to do the job. That's not so with the ones we use now."

"I see. Speed in reserve, that's one point. And what else?" Sharov looked at Nikolai impatiently. Nikolai racked his memory for every other detail that the designer had mentioned in his lecture.

"You don't know much, I must say," said Sharov reproachfully. "You ought to have found out every detail about that lathe. Do you think we'd get a reply if we wrote and asked them about it?"

Quite naturally Sharov had started addressing Nikolai in the friendly second person singular. Nikolai responded likewise: why should they, both of the same age, speak to each other in any other way. They sat down side by side at the desk near a large window against which a recently planted sapling tapped a twig. Workers kept coming up to the desk. Sharov explained things to some of them, issued instructions to others, sent some off on errands, but kept returning to his conversation with Nikolai. He told him that he was planning to enter the polytechnical college, that he would take the entrance exams but was afraid he would muff in English which was a subject he could not manage.

"We learned German at school, you see. And at the technical school, too. And now, just think of it, they pop this English at you. I don't need to get an excellent in it, damn it all, I could scrape through with a fair."

Nikolai promised his help—he had always done well in English—and said that Sharov could count on his help in any other subject he found difficult. But Sharov said that he preferred to deal with difficulties on his own.

A young man in a light suit came up; Sharov introduced him to Niko-



lai as an engineer from the shop's technical control department. The engineer ran a searching, appraising eye over Nikolai's suit and hat, muttered a few words through his teeth and asked Sharov to go with him to his department. Sharov left, telling Nikolai that he would be back in a few moments. Nikolai rose and walked along the line of lathes in his section.

Most of the lathes were operated by very young turners; a little apart from them, near the window, were two lathes operated by older workers. Everything was running smoothly except at one lathe, which had stopped; near it stood a pink-cheeked youth struggling to make his casting secure in the chuck.

Nikolai stopped behind this worker and watched his clumsy movements.

"Let me give you a hand," he said. "Come on, move over."

The turner looked him up and down, frowned and muttered that he would manage by himself. Nikolai shouldered him out of the way, secured the casting with rapid confident movements and brought the cutting-tool up to it.

"Now get on with it. Call me when you need to change the piece. I'll show you how to do it."

The turner went on frowning at him and took a shaving. Nikolai walked on with a feeling of satisfaction: one way or another, he had given his first orders to a worker in his section. He saw Sharov coming towards him. Sharov held several small couplings in his hand and was examining them carefully as he walked. His face looked grim, his pale eyes were angry, red spots burned on his cheeks.

"What's up? What are you doing with those couplings?" asked Nikolai.

"Going to throw them down the drain," replied Sharov, hurling the couplings on the desk. "He deserves to be flogged, the bastard. You'll have to deal with him when he comes on evening shift. I warn you, though: he knows how to play on your feelings by pretending to be oh, so unhappy; he can whine and grovel and promise you anything. But once he's left on his own all his promises are thrown to the wind. Yet he can work if he wants to. He's got a gift for it only he drowns that gift in a beer mug. You stand up to him, though, that's the main thing," Sharov went on firmly, forgetting that Nikolai had no idea whom he was talking about. "He's a gay spark. He sings, he plays the accordion and when he feels in the mood he works better than anybody. But that's all on the surface. Inside he's empty. . . . Anyway, you'll find that out for yourself. Now let's have a look at the lathes."

"But what's the fellow's name?" asked Nikolai, alarmed at the prospect of having to deal with such a man.

"Milovidov. Yasha Milovidov. Oh, to hell with him. You have a look at the machines."

Sharov was eager to be off to his new shop the next morning and was impatient to hand over to Nikolai. Not sparing Nikolai's new suit he made him examine and handle and test the lathes. He laid several cutters on Nikolai's knees—the very best cutters, that were to be kept for the most important jobs. The tools were thickly coated with grease and left dark stains on Nikolai's trousers. Sharov told him that petrol removed stains perfectly and thereupon presented Nikolai with a bottleful, informing him that it was pure aviation spirit.

Sharov knew his way about the place perfectly. Everything was in exemplary order and of the very best quality. Or did he only imagine that everything in his turnery was the finest, tip-top, better than anywhere else? Anyway, Sharov firmly believed that was so and handed over everything to Nikolai with the air of entrusting him with a priceless treasure.

"Don't you start giving it out too freely," he warned. "We have chaps who don't put a thing aside or save up and then come running to beg. The things they lose. And spoil. I gave my calipers to one of our cadgers and he returned them to me all bent. You might think he'd been driving nails in with them."

At the end of the shift Sharov got ready to leave and suggested to Nikolai that they should go and look at the new workshop. Now, there was a building job for you. Close to the roof, workers were moving carefully along planks, putting the glass in; the carpenters were fixing frames of white freshly-sown wood into the window openings, painters were painting the office cubicles, concrete-layers were pouring the foundations for the machines. The place smelt of paint, fresh-sawn wood and upturned earth.

In one corner machines were being installed. That was where Sharov was heading for. Catching sight of something from a distance, he left Nikolai and ran to the construction supervisor.

"Put the lockers in later. I asked you that, didn't I?" he called. "Everything's to be done in the right order. We told you how to do it."

The man turned his back on him and went on issuing instructions to the workers who were fixing the lockers; Sharov rushed to the door threatening to bring immediately the chief technologist, the chief engineer, the entire management, in fact.

"See you tomorrow," he called to Nikolai. "They're upsetting the entire technological process."

Nikolai, too, left the building. He stopped outside of his own shop, not quite certain which was the right door. While he hesitated, one of the doors was flung open and out came a young man wearing a shirt embroidered at the neck. Nikolai recognized him as a turner in his section who had come up to Sharov and complained about a faulty tool. Sharov gave him another one and afterwards told Nikolai that the man's name was Vladimir Nazarenko, that he worked well and, moreover, was interested in music. Now Nazarenko was in a hurry to leave the shop; he all but tripped over Nikolai as he rushed by, burdened with an enormous, brightly-polished brass trombone.

Without a glance at Nikolai, Nazarenko went towards the factory gates. He was anxious to lose no time; and holding his trombone with both hands soon broke into a run. No longer in doubt, Nikolai opened the door resolutely and walked into the shop.

Sharov's place was empty. Nikolai hung up his hat, sat down and looked around. Only one of the lathes in the section was idle; a young man with a pale, narrow face was approaching it with a light, springy step. His movements were quick, his dark liquid eyes gay. But when the man reached his lathe, Nikolai noticed that under one of those eyes lay a puffy purply-grey bruise and that he was carrying the spoiled couplings Sharov had shown him, tossing them playfully into the air as he walked.

Nikolai watched the fellow with interest. He saw him stop in front of his lathe, toss the couplings to the ground, place a casting in the chuck,

bring up the tool and begin to work. There was speed, precision and beauty in every movement and, at the same time, a touch of casualness, as if the man wanted to show everybody that for him work was child's play, that, if he felt like it, he could turn the most complicated piece out of any casting without the slightest effort.

Nikolai kept his eyes on the turner so long that the man noticed it and smiled back defiantly; the blood rushed to Nikolai's cheeks.

He ought to say something to the man about the couplings he had spoiled the day before, thought Nikolai; but he would leave that to Sharov. After all, he had not taken over from him yet.

Nikolai remained seated at his desk although there was absolutely nothing for him to do—not that he would have known it if there had been. He was afraid that the workers in his section might notice his inactivity, so he took a notebook out of his pocket, furrowed his brows deeply, and started a letter to Nina.

"So here I am at the factory, my dear Nina," he began. "I have been appointed to one of the best shops where I'm going to work as foreman. You'd probably be surprised to see this shop, it's so big and marvellously equipped. . . ."

When he had described the whole shop he decided that Nina would not find it interesting and tore the page off his pad. That was not the way to write—he ought to tell her how lonely he felt without her, how she was never out of his mind. That, however, would not have been true: he had not given Nina a thought all day.

He decided to write his letter in the evening when he had settled in his new room. Now he would go and look for Andrei.

He took another turn between the lathes. His face wore a look of deep concentration. He picked up from the floor a cap that someone had dropped, and shyly laid it on the next lathe he passed.

"Find out who it belongs to and return it," he mumbled without glancing at the girl in charge of the lathe. She eyed him with interest. "It was lying near your lathe. . . ." Making an effort not to hurry or betray his acute embarrassment, he took his own hat from the desk, put it on and walked out of the shop.

2

The *Tribuna* office was not housed in the main building with the factory management, the Party bureau, the trade-union committee and other organizations: it shared a small cramped building near by with the print-shop, the Party committee reading-room and the Comsomol committee office.

When Andrei and Stoletov walked into the editor's office, they found it occupied by a young woman who was sitting at a typewriter. The broad checked smock she wore failed to conceal her condition of advanced pregnancy.

"Where's Chumov?" asked Stoletov. "See if you can find him for me, please, Valentina Ivanovna."

"He's left for town," the young woman replied with alarm. "He took a file of back-numbers, gave orders for proofs of what we have standing in type and took them with him too. He said he wouldn't be back."

"Well, that's that," Stoletov smiled. "Then find me Vanya Pope-rechny."

The typist left the office. Stoletov showed Andrei to a large desk that stood near the window.

"Here's where you work. Get going. Not much of an outfit just now; the last editor didn't try to expand it."

Poperechny turned out to be quite a youngster; he wore an embroidered Ukrainian shirt and his fair hair lay in such neat curls that Andrei found himself wondering whether a barber's tongs had not had a hand in their creation. The young man shook hands with Stoletov rather shyly and looked at Andrei curiously.

"Been in the library, I suppose," said Stoletov, glancing at the thick, shabbily-bound book in Poperechny's hand. "Still reading novels, I see. But you missed your lecture again, I heard from Vasili Nikitich."

"I was making up the paper," replied Poperechny, slipping the book into a drawer. "I explained to Vasili Nikitich but he didn't want to listen. I have to do the job entirely on my own."

"Well, you won't be on your own any longer. Let me introduce you to your new editor. Show him the ropes."

Stoletov asked Valentina Ivanovna how she was feeling and whether she was soon going to take her maternity leave. The young woman blushed and at once her face became quite childish.

"Yes," she whispered. "In about three weeks' time."

"You can see for yourself what a mess we're in," said Poperechny with a shrug, as soon as Stoletov had left the room. "The editor was sacked and went off without handing over to his successor. Valya's going on leave and there'll be nobody to type the copy. It takes the comp. a whole day to set from manuscript."

Other complaints followed: the print-stop was upside down, the best comp. had left two months ago and there were learners on the job now; why, the printer had to help them. The printing-press was old and kept breaking down. The guillotine was out of order—the paper for the whole edition had to be cut by hand. There was no standing copy ready for the next few numbers.

"You see what a fix we're in," Poperechny gabbled on. "When a correspondent comes from the regional newspaper, he takes a whole brief-case full of copy away with him. He gets the chief engineer and the head-designer and anybody he likes to write for the paper. But we can't get a thing out of them. Doesn't make any difference how much I ask and beg and nag people about it—you'd think they were all deaf. Chumov, the last editor, quarrelled with everybody, you see. Well, there it is, it's an awful mess. The only people who'll write for us are poets. I announced a competition for the best poem about our factory. You should have seen the number of entries there were. But they were pretty bad. I had to rewrite them myself. One comrade sent in a poem that I gave a whole column to. That was no good either. People complained that there wasn't a line in the paper about production, only poetry. The result is I have to write everything myself. I run about the shops and talk to people, and there's my story. Of course I always sign it with the name of the person I talked to."

Andrei had learned from Stoletov how bad things were with the paper but he heard Poperechny out. He listened attentively to everything: about the good comp. who went off to work as a hostel warden after quarrelling with Chumov and about the literary circle that used to be run by the paper under the auspices of the chief librarian but which folded up when Chumov

offended the librarian and declared that such circles were the business of the club, not of the paper.

Then Vanya showed the new editor the print-shop, a long, narrow room with little space to spare. Near the window stood cases of type, and near the door a printing-press and the useless paper-cutter. A dour-faced, elderly printer was lazily printing sheets with some small announcements on them.

"What's that you're printing?" asked Poperechny. "Oh, another job for the housing and public amenities department! How long are you going to keep this up? You can't print the paper, but when it's a matter of doing something for those people, the press seems to work perfectly."

The printer looked disdainfully at Poperechny and went on with his printing without a word. Andrei picked up one of the printed sheets: it contained the house rules and regulations for the hostels—a long list of items each of which began with the words "It is forbidden."

"That's the whole outfit," said Poperechny when they had reached the office again. "You can see the conditions we have to work in."

"Let's have a look at some back-numbers and the plan for the next few numbers, and then, maybe, you'll take me round the factory? I've got to know something about that, after all."

"Of course I will. Only you must be hungry after travelling, aren't you? And what about arranging your lodgings? Have you done anything about that?"

"Stoletov rang up about it. They promised to send someone over here."

"That's no good. They'll shove you in somewhere you won't like at all. Valya!" said Poperechny to the typist, "be a sport and use our newspaper's influence to get the editor a room at the Stalingrad."

"I want a double room, I came with a friend," said Andrei. "He's an engineer. He's gone to the personnel department to see about his work."

Valya nodded and went out. Poperechny brought a file of back-numbers and the plan for future work and laid them on the desk. Andrei found the paper dull and its language not particularly grammatical. He could make no headway with the plan; to understand it he would have to learn something about the factory, its production programme and how work was going. Poperechny proposed that they should visit the main shops, to which Andrei readily agreed.

They went outside. The sun was setting and the distant mountains were growing dark. The white plaster figure of a young worker near the factory gates was turning pink, the sunset glowed in the windows of the management offices.

"I'll take you to the foundry first," said Poperechny. "It's near the gates and, after all, it's the place where everything begins."

There was no mistaking the foundry. The dust from the moulders' sand on the way to the doors and the grimy windows left no doubt that this was no machine or assembly shop but a place of heavy, dirty work.

"This way," said Poperechny, pushing open a wicket-door in the broad gates. "They do both iron- and steel-melting here."

How many foundries are there in the Soviet Union? And each one is different. Each factory has its own features that distinguish it from others, something that gives it individuality. A factory scene cannot be a mere repetition of another factory scene any more than a meadow or a wood or a ploughed field in different parts of the Soviet Union can repeat

itself, although birch trees grow in the woods near Moscow as well as in the Urals and corn ripens in kolkhoz fields in Siberia as well as in the Ukraine. But nobody mistakes the forests of the Urals for those of the Moscow region, or the plough-lands of the Kuban with the sweeping steppes of Siberia. And no matter how many foundries you may see in your life you will never confuse one with another.

The foundry that Andrei and Vanya Poperechny walked into was strikingly large—that was the first impression it gave. It was a great square crowned by a vast roof of glass. The glass was sooted and through it the sky looked sullen and threatening; inside the shop it was gloomy, too, although the sun was shining out of doors.

The huge shop was quieter and emptier than Andrei expected. The workers, bent over the moulds, were quite lost in it. The chains hung lifeless from the overhead cranes. The distant corners of the shop were dark and deserted.

"Why's the place so empty?" asked Andrei whose idea of a workshop was bound up with the ones where his father and he had worked—the machine shop in an old Moscow factory with its many workers and closely-ranged machine-tools.

"This building has only just been finished," explained Poperechny. "It was planned on this scale to be ready for the time when the factory's working full blast. But we've still got many shops to be built and that's why the place looks empty. . . . But there are more workers here than you think. We're not short of them."

Andrei cast Poperechny a look of respect. Here was a chap who knew what he was talking about.

"Show me round. I'm interested in everything."

"I can show you round the foundry. I used to work as a moulder before I went on to the paper. But I shan't be much help to you in the other shops. I get lost with machine-tools. I might make mistakes. But we'll always find somebody to show us round."

It was hard to imagine Vanya Poperechny, so spotless with his flaxen hair and eyebrows, working as a moulder and going about looking as dirty as the people around them in this building. But judging from the way he pushed a moulder aside, went up to a moulding box, picked up a shape and, not being afraid of getting dirty, grasped a mechanical ram and made it jump and drive down the sand into the already prepared moulding box, he had certainly worked here before.

"So you've not forgotten the job," a lanky man in dirty overalls said approvingly. "Still writing poetry? It's a long time since I've read anything of yours."

"I've given up writing poetry, Comrade Lepikhin," said Poperechny, handing the ram to a worker. "Or, to be more exact, I write for myself now, not for the press."

"That's a pretty daft thing to do, in my opinion—writing for yourself," said Lepikhin. "I bet they're not really for yourself. Isn't there some girl you show them to for her opinion?"

He was about to give Poperechny a friendly slap on the back when he looked from the snow-white shirt to his grimy hand, smiled and dropped his arm.

"Instead of ragging a chap you'd do better to meet the new editor," complained Poperechny, adding significantly: "He's come here from Moscow."

Lepikhin took a good look at Andrei's well-built figure, and made a mental note of his candid smile and debonair appearance.

"Ever been a sailor?" he asked with a friendly smile.

"No. I worked in a factory. At a milling machine." Then, because he did not want Lepikhin to take him for an experienced machine operator, he added quickly: "Only for two years, though. Afterwards I went to university."

"A milling machine, eh? Well, that's not a bad trade, either. Drop in to see us. We'll find something for you to write about."

Lepikhin walked away. Poperechny looked after him with admiration. He forgot all about Andrei and only jerked to his senses when the hooter sounded to mark the end of the shift.

"Would you like to see the first machine shop?"

But Andrei told him that he was expecting his friend to come to the office after the shift. That was what they had agreed.

"That suits me," said Poperechny. "Between you and me and the gate post I've got to be somewhere myself after the hooter. Valya will take you along to the Stalingrad."

He saw Andrei back to his office and went off saying that he would be sure to drop in at the Stalingrad later to settle what to prepare for the next number.

"I'll get hold of all we have," he called over his shoulder. "We've got something in type as well as some manuscript copy."

Andrei had not been in the office many minutes before the door creaked again and in came Nikolai. His pace was leisurely; with a nod for the typist he sat down sedately on a wooden bench. His face wore an expression of indifference but Andrei knew very well that something lay behind that studied look.

The new light-grey suit Nikolai took such pride in was covered with dark stains. His hands were spotted with grease. There were grease-spots even on his face. All this, and that air of independence and the way he lolled on the bench told Andrei that something highly important had happened to his friend.

"How did you get on? What shop are you going to be in?"

"The first, of course." Nikolai's tone was casual. He paused, then went on with studied indifference: "I've been appointed foreman of a turnery."

Andrei spun round and said with a sigh of deep sympathy:

"Foreman? And there was I thinking you'd be appointed shop manager."

The Stalingrad was a handsome buff-coloured building with small white moulded balconies in front. The ground floor was occupied by a large provisions store and a hairdressing saloon.

"Here we are, up that staircase," said Valya. "Go up to the fourth floor and ask for Sasha. He's the hostel warden."

"Why's it called the Stalingrad?" asked Andrei.

"That's because they were just starting to build it when the battle of Stalingrad was over. They didn't get very far with it then, of course. Only laid the foundations and that wing on the right there. The rest was completed quite recently. In this part of the building there's a youth

hostel. For the trainees. Boys in the old wing, girls in the new one. The top floor is kept free for visitors."

The staircase divided between each floor to meet in large well-lit landings. There were pictures on the walls of these landings—brightly coloured paintings of lakes and mountains and meadows with remarkably large flowers growing in them.

"Pure formalism," said Andrei, pausing in front of one flower painting. "Have you ever seen daisies that size? Nature doesn't make 'em that size. They're more like sunflowers."

"Perhaps the artist wanted to improve them. . . . Anyway, how do you know there aren't such daisies in the Urals? Perhaps there are."

"Well, perhaps there are," Andrei conceded. "If the Urals can make a foreman out of Nik they must have daisies that size."

They ran up to the top landing where Sasha the warden, a young man with an abundance of tiny freckles, handed them the key to their room.

"The beds are made up," he told them. "If you need anything come and ask me for it. I'm always here."

The room was rather small and unbearably white. So white were the walls that the bed linen—also new—looked somewhat grey. The identically-folded pique counterpanes, the writing desks, the bedside lockers were all new and looked as if they had never been used before.

The wide window commanded a view of the factory housing estate stretching towards the lake at the foot of the hill. The place now lay bathed in the pink light of early sunset. The waters of the lake gleaming through the trees had a pinkish tone. But across the lake the mountains were deep blue and coils of mist crept along the lakeshore.

Andrei flung open the window, almost upsetting the vase of flowers that stood on the sill.

"Come and look at this. I say, isn't it fine. I'm so glad we can see the mountains from our window."

No reply came from Nikolai. Andrei turned round and saw Nikolai engaged in acrobatics. He stood with his legs in the air, his face red, his neck-veins standing out like cords. With some difficulty he managed to keep his balance; then he sprang back on to his feet.

"I'm a foreman! Think of that, Andrei. Do you know what I am? The foreman of a turnery. That's what Uncle Vasya was. Remember how important he was? That moustache of his? And his fancy waistcoat with the little pockets? Oh, I used to be so scared of him when he came to see Boris Ivanovich. And I'm a foreman like him. Oh no, you can't understand what that means."

He started to tell Andrei how the personnel manager had proposed putting him in the office of the chief technologist ("Do you realize what that would have meant? Sitting at a desk in an office!"), how he had parried the proposal and at once asked to be sent to the first machine shop where the man in charge turned out to be a very likeable chap ("Like your dad, honestly he is") and how he had immediately suggested the turnery.

"It's a splendid place, you'll see," Nikolai went on. "Plenty of new lathes. They came in not long ago. All the workers used to be trainees—fine chaps with advanced theoretical training. And the work is amazingly interesting—in fact, I'm delighted."

Andrei listened somewhat sceptically. Would Nik be able to work on his own as a foreman? Why, he'd be sure to make some silly mistake on the first day. But Nikolai was deeply offended when Andrei voiced these doubts.

"I've got the practical knowledge. I took a course in a factory, didn't I? And after all—I shan't be left on my own. The manager of that shop isn't a chap to leave a man without any help and the instructor-repairer's had a lot of experience. I've already met him. So you needn't worry about me."

But Andrei's qualms were not set at rest. He had met foremen in his life; they used to come and see his father. They were always men well on in life, men whose hair had grown grey over their work. He knew what respect his father held these foremen in—and his father was himself a highly-qualified worker. And now here was Nik, a student only yesterday, a schoolboy the day before, suddenly being given this high calling.

His mind would have been more at ease had Nikolai been put in charge of a small workshop, for instance—after all he was an engineer who had graduated with honours and there was no doubt about his ability. Or if he had been asked to supervise some important designing job or . . . well, there was plenty of work in the factory for a young engineer.

But a foreman! That was going too far. Why, the very name suggested someone who goes in front. And was Nikolai ready to do that yet?

"Your idea of a foreman is out-of-date," Nikolai protested. "You picture him as some old fellow with steel-rimmed spectacles testing a part with his teeth and measuring it with his eye. You only find that sort in the films now."

"What do you mean? At the factory my father works at. . . ."

"Don't compare our factory with the one where Boris Ivanovich works. That's a really old place where there are workers who've been there for fifty years. Why, our place has only been up for a little more than ten years."

"I'm not talking about the buildings. I'm talking about people."

"So am I."

"Then what do you mean by ten years?"

"I mean that your old foreman can't be cut in two and put to work in two factories at once."

The argument went on until someone thumped loudly on the door. Vasya Gorlinka stood there, hot and red-faced, the suitcases and rucksacks at his feet.

"Here are your things," he said.

Nikolai and Andrei stood quite abashed while Vasya dragged the luggage into the room. Then they recovered their wits and, hurrying towards him, took their things and thanked him warmly.

"Why did you fetch them? We'd have gone ourselves. . . ."

They shook Vasya's hand. Vasya smiled, mopped his brow with his sleeve and left.

Andrei and Nikolai went to the window and leaned out. Peering into the deepening twilight, they saw a lorry with a suitcase and a basket in the back. Dusya was perched on the basket. She was leaning over the side of the lorry and talking to another girl. Her loud voice carried all the way up to the fourth floor.

"Dusya," called Andrei. "Thank you. You're our guardian angel."

Dusya looked up, waved to them and shouted something inaudible. At that moment Vasya darted out of the hostel, hopped nimbly on to the lorry which shot off, leaving a trail of dust.

For a long time Andrei and Nikolai gazed after the lorry. The dusk was spilling over the ground, the lake no longer gleamed pink, the mountains had grown quite black, a light breeze stirred the dust on the road and rustled the foliage of the young poplars that had been planted round the Stalingrad building. Lights flashed on in the windows of distant houses.

Beyond the lake appeared a broken chain of lights at the foot of the mountain. There was a village on that side.

Andrei and Nikolai did not feel like staying indoors. They went out. The breeze ruffled the hair on their bare heads. It was a fresh, balmy breeze that swept from the mountains and the lake, bringing a scent of pines and water. It was a breeze that did not belong to the town at all and yet near where the young men stood rose tall buildings with gates shaped like great arches. In front of the houses and in the courtyards that they could see through the arches grew young trees. The trees could not have been in the ground long—they were propped up with stout stakes.

People had not gone to bed yet. The house windows were brightly lit, young people played volley-ball in the yards and the provisions store was crowded with shoppers. The evening breeze brought strains of music from afar. No radio music, this; it sounded like a brass band playing a little unassuredly, stumbling over passages in a well-known tune.

"They're rehearsing, I expect," said Andrei. "Let's walk in the direction of the music and see where it takes us to."

They walked on, passing a group of lads in trainees' uniform; they were mending a seine-net on the porch of one of the houses. Near by, right on the road, some little boys were throwing bats at chocks in the game of *gorodki*. Nikolai leaped out of the way as a bat that someone had hurled just missed him.

He picked up the bat and said:

"You shouldn't play on the road, you might hurt someone."

No sooner had he spoken than he recalled the yard in Moscow where he used to throw just such a bat and the old man who scolded him for playing in the yard. As if there was anywhere else you could play! The old buffer didn't realize that—he was simply afraid of being hit with a bat.

Could he have turned into an old man like that, Nikolai wondered. That was how the boys probably saw him.

And to show what he was really made of, he stopped, took a proper stance and with one throw brought down Grandmother at the Window—one of the most difficult arrangements of the chocks.

"That's the way you ought to throw, instead of trying to hit passers-by."

The boys rushed to rearrange the chocks, Nikolai went over to Andrei who had been watching him with a smile on his face.

"Foreman!" Andrei said with a shrug. "Call yourself a-foreman!"

"A foreman at that game, anyway. Did you see that throw of mine? You try and do it."

The street ended. They had passed the last of the houses and now only the unpaved track stretched broad and hard-trodden ahead of them. Far ahead they could make out an arched gateway in faint outline. Huge dark trees stood against the starlit sky.

"That must be the Park of Culture," Andrei said. "I can hear the music."

Somewhere quite near a trombone brayed. It kept playing the same passage—a few bars. Andrei could clearly imagine the trombone player with his puffed-out cheeks and damp brow.

The gateway turned out to be a high plaster arch. From there a wide shrub-lined path led uphill. Enormous, broad-girthed pines thrust their boughs towards the path, their shaggy tops rising straight into the sky. The park lay in darkness; only in one place, some way ahead, shone a little group of electric lights. It was there that the band was practising.

The band practise was proceeding on an open-air stage facing an amphitheatre full of narrow, backless benches. The benches were empty, except for the front row where the musicians sat holding on their knees instruments in cases and bags.

The trombone player sat alone on the stage. He was a very young trombone player; his cheeks were red as he played the few bars over and over again.

"That'll do," someone called to him from the bench. "It's fine now. Let's go."

But the trombone player kept it up. Now he played the short passage with firm assurance and the sounds came out of his instrument loudly and triumphantly. His cheeks swelled for the last time and finally he lowered the trombone, picked up the music and leaped from the stage.

"Now we can go," he said. "We must put out the lights. Where's the main switch, you chaps?"

"I say, he's in my section, I swear he is," whispered Nikolai. "He's a turner called Vladimir Nazarenko."

Nikolai was delighted to find someone he knew in the park. He felt like coming out of the darkness on to the brightly-lit space but the lights went out, the musicians rose from the bench and started discussing some business of their own that Nikolai did not understand. They were saying that someone had been called but hadn't turned up to the practise, that on Sunday they had to go somewhere to play but that the flutist had broken his flute and had been given a new instrument which did not suit him at all.

"He's got the right to refuse it," said the trumpet player hotly. "Why don't they mend the old one that he's used to?"

The musicians walked away and the park became quiet. Only the murmur of the wind in the tree-tops broke the silence. Suddenly there was a rustle of twigs and a pine cone fell swishing down to the ground. Nikolai and Andrei looked up. Overhead they could see patches of sky beyond the tops of trees. The stars looked much larger than in Moscow.

It was late and he had not yet written his letter to Nina, thought Nikolai. What was Nina doing now? Sleeping probably without giving him a thought. . . .

He glanced at his watch—the gold one that his father had given him. Midnight. The Kremlin chimes would be ringing for the whole world to hear. People would be coming home from the theatre. Mum would be lying in bed reading. . . . And here he was, far from Moscow, with trees all around him and the dark pines dropping their cones on him and a big unfamiliar star blazing quite close to the new moon.

"Haven't you got the feeling that we're a long way from Moscow?" Andrei asked him. "It's midnight here, and there it's only ten o'clock."
"That's true. I'd forgotten about that."

How could he have forgotten it? In other words, Nina was not asleep but busy with something: getting ready for her exams, maybe, or going for a stroll and thinking of him. What sort of a letter ought he to write? Should he tell her about the park, about the star that looked like a bit of the moon, about the lake?

Perhaps it would be better if he wrote only about how much he loved her. About how sorry he was that he had not found the courage to tell her so in Moscow, and how he wished she were here to see all the things he was seeing. But perhaps a letter like that would annoy her, perhaps she wouldn't answer it. Then everything would be over and all his hopes would be dashed. Maybe it would be better to wait until she had dropped one little word that betrayed her feelings and desires.

What, then, if he wrote only about what he had seen in Verkhnyaya Kamenka? Yes, that would be better. He'd tell her that he was a foreman, too. And how he and Andrei remembered Moscow and how he'd mixed up the time, thinking that midnight had come to Moscow two hours too early. She ought to realize that in thinking of Moscow he had thought of her. He might even drop a hint to that effect, only it would have to be a very delicate one, one that wouldn't annoy her.

Then how was he going to start the letter? "My dear Nina" was a bit bold, "Dear Nina" too offhand. And just "Nina" was too abrupt. . . . He worried about this all the way back to the Stalingrad but came to no decision. . . .

Sasha the warden had not gone to bed. He handed Andrei an envelope.

"Vanya Poperechny was here asking for you. He left this. If there's nothing you need I'll go off to bed."

It was cool in the bedroom, for the breeze was blowing in through the open window; over the lake hung the horned moon; a narrow silvery path of light stretched across the dark water.

"Are you going to write?" Andrei asked with a yawn. "I'm not. I'm far too sleepy."

Nikolai wanted to reply that he was certainly going to write but he, too, felt the call of the smooth clean sheets. The long day that had started on the station square was over. He had to sleep, his eyes closed without his being aware of it.

Chapter Five

1

When Stoletov was appointed to Verkhnyaya Kamenka his father-in-law, Ivan Konstantinovich, declared that he would accompany him there.

"If you only knew how much of my life is bound up with those parts," he told his daughter Varya. "The happiest years of my life, all my youth."

"How can you think of it, Dad," Varya exclaimed in alarm. "I won't let you go. You'd better forget about it."

The old man felt hurt. From his arm-chair at the window he silently watched his daughter and son-in-law pack; then he turned his back on them and stared at the top of a poplar that grew beside the house. The tree was

not yet in leaf and through its bare branches a white cloud could be seen floating across the blue early-spring sky.

The old man sat lost in his thoughts. His head, bathed in the light of the setting sun, wore a silvery gleam. His thin hair bristled stiffly above his forehead and his grey scanty brows. His face which had already acquired a deep sunburn, was quite still, as if it had been modeled out of brown clay; his light-blue slightly dulled eyes looked startlingly prominent.

Ivan Konstantinovich was approaching seventy and the figure that was once so strong and muscular had wasted away to become angular and uncertain in its movements. He hobbled rather than walked—he had been lame from childhood—and looked as if he was bound to stumble and fall. But he managed to keep on his feet and liked to take long walks through the town and come home to tell the family proudly about the route he had taken; that route always sounded long and difficult.

The family loved and cherished the old man. They never let him see that they considered him old and feeble. But now, for the first time, he felt old, incapable of doing things for himself as Stepan or Varya did. He wanted to leave with Stepan but he could not—Varya was quite firm about that. And he was in no position to take things into his own hands—he couldn't go, there was nothing to be done but sit at home.

"But think, Daddy dear," said Varya, perching on the arm of his chair. "Do you really want to leave me? I'd be on my own with the children. It's hard enough for me to part with Stepan."

She ran the palm of her hand tenderly over her father's bristly hair and kissed him on the ear as she always used to do when she was a little girl.

She's a sly one, the old man thought. What a way she had of talking him out of something.

He sat on with knitted brows but now he was thinking that perhaps it would really be hard on Varya if he were to leave. Looking after Ivan and Demyan was no joke. Didn't he know how hard it was to get the little wretches to do their homework and keep up to the mark at school.

"Oh, you'll manage the children all right," he said, not giving in yet. "I never asked for any help when I had you on my hands, and you were no angel, I can assure you."

"But I was a little girl, Daddy. If they were girls, I could manage them on my own. But they're boys. Look, as soon as term finishes we'll all go to Stepan together for the holidays. It's only a matter of a few weeks."

That was true. Ivan Konstantinovich was hardly ready for the day of departure when it came along. They ordered a taxi, put the luggage in the boot, and off they went with the old man sitting in front with the driver and Varya and the boys in the back. The yard-woman slammed the door to, the poplar shook its new dress of leaves, the taxi gave a jerk and took them all to the station.

All the time in the train Ivan Konstantinovich looked out of the window. Varya stretched out on the soft upholstered seat—she had had a tiring year and then there had been the packing; the little boys stood all day at the open corridor window with their grandfather who told them some long story that Varya could not catch. Not till evening, when the children had been put to sleep on the upper berths, did the old man sit down beside his daughter.

"Your mother and I brought you this same way forty years ago," he said. "You were only three weeks old then and your mother and I were young and happy and we were going to the place where I'd been given my first job. I had just graduated from the university but nobody in any of the central regions wanted to take me—they maintained I'd been connected with student disturbances. So we decided to go to some distant place where they'd be sure to take me. We chose Verkhnyaya Kamenka. They took me there all right—it was considered a place of exile then."

He patted Varya's hand and lay down on his berth. When she woke up next morning he was up, standing at the window watching the trees sweep past.

Stepan met them at the station. The little boys, excited by the journey, kissed their father and jumped into the car; Varya drew her husband to her, wondering how she could have lived so long without him—her companion in life, the joy of her days, her defender against all harm. How happy she was that they were together. She would have to think of some way of preventing them ever being parted again.

"Drive like the wind," Stoletov said gaily to the driver. "Show our visitors a bit of real driving."

Ivan Konstantinovich sat beside the driver, looking ahead. Behind him the boys were laughing and Stepan was telling Varya something, but the old man felt sad at heart. His life was over. Once upon a time he had been young and full of sap but now he was an old fogey brought to spend the last years of his life with his son-in-law.

Just before they reached Verkhnyaya Kamenka the old man became so agitated that he asked the driver to slow down.

"I remember these parts," he said, "I want to have a look round."

The driver drove slowly and Ivan Konstantinovich, deeply moved, gazed at the line of the mountains, recognizing every slope, at the tiny cottages of the village. They have grown older but they were still the same ones that stood here in his own days.

"Stop the car," he said all of a sudden, touching the driver's elbow. "Please stop here."

The driver braked sharply; Ivan Konstantinovich opened the door and got out on to the road. A small cottage stood in thick verdure a little way back from the road. The garden was fenced by new green-painted railings, a new roof glistened over the dark timbers.

"What is it, Dad?" asked Varya, getting out of the car. "Aren't you feeling well?"

Ivan Konstantinovich did not answer. His face was sad; there was a suspicious glitter in his eye behind the spectacles.

"That's my school..." he muttered. "My school, Varya. Where I used to teach.... And now others live there, somebody else teaches there...."

The old man drew a small Karelian-birch cigarette case out of his pocket, took a cigarette from it, lighted it and got back into the car. And long after the car was running on its smooth course, Ivan Konstantinovich went on gazing back at his school.

"Actually that's not used as a school any more," said the driver, speaking for the first time. "It's used by a kolkhoz as a crèche. There's the school."

He nodded towards a white stone-faced building with broad steps leading up to the entrance, a pillared affair crowned by a pediment. The pillars were stumpy and stout and somewhat offended the laws of architecture, but they gave the place a solid permanent look.

The driver went on talking but Ivan Konstantinovich had closed his eyes and set off on an excursion into the past. He remembered the school, the kerosene lamp over the teacher's desk, the school children wearing felt boots and homespun. He remembered how much he wanted to teach those lads to live finer, more interesting lives.

For some reason he recalled a piercingly cold day with the wind sweeping the snow before it across the road. Convicts were being marched under guard down that road.

He recalled how he and his young wife had run out of doors when they saw the column approaching and had thrust bread and potatoes into the prisoners' hands—everything they could find in the house. The guards tried to keep them away but they knew it was hopeless; for if one was driven away, there was always another running out from the next house.

How long ago that was! It was more like a scene read about in some book in one's youth than something that had really happened.

"Fallen asleep, Dad?" said Varya. "Wake up, we're there."

Ivan Konstantinovich opened his eyes; the car had come to a halt in front of a small, freshly-plastered house. Stepan was getting the luggage out of the boot, the children were already dashing for the porch while the old man struggled out of the car and made his way to a seat on the bench near the gate. Varya and Stepan carried the bags indoors; the boys ran off at once down to the lake; the car drove away. Ivan Konstantinovich remained alone; he looked down the hill-slope and saw among the pines other white houses like the one where Stepan lived.

Why, it was a whole town. And it was just here that he used to come hunting.

It all came back to him. How he would roam on skis over these very slopes, a gun slung over his shoulder. He never used to fire it—it would have been a pity to disturb the solemn silence of the forest in its winter garb. Only once had he fired—he had wounded a hare and it had screamed like a child. Since that time he carried the gun as a pure matter of form: in case he should meet a wolf or some ill-intentioned fellow. But he had never had to use it against either one or the other: the ill-intentioned men sat in warm houses and had to be fought a different way, a way he could not master, with the result that three years later they had forced the young teacher out of Verkhnyaya Kamenka.

He was sorry to leave. It meant breaking with his pupils and with a school house round which he had found time to lay out a young orchard. But he had to shift to another place and take work in a saw-mill where he had spent all the rest of his working life.

Varya came up to her father, kissed the top of his head and helped him to his feet.

"Come indoors and see all the things that Stepan has got ready for us."

There were two rooms in the flat. In both of them—on the tables, the window-sills, the tops of the cupboards—stood vases with huge bunches of wild flowers. Clumsily-hung white net curtains—the work of a man, that was clear—billowed at the windows. There was something very clean,

fresh, and new about these rooms with their smell of fresh paint and of timber that had not been long from the saw.

"I've only two rooms now," said Stoletov, "but they'll give me another if the family stays for the winter. I think we can manage with two for the summer."

"We'll manage," said Ivan Konstantinovich. "And as for the winter I'll gladly stay if Varya agrees."

"We won't talk about the winter today," said Varya. "We'd better settle in and unpack and then have dinner. Are you going to work today, Stepan?"

"Yes, for a little," Stoletov replied guiltily. "I hope you don't mind but I really must go."

"I don't mind, dear."

Varya saw her husband to the gate and stood for a long time watching him as he walked down the hill—a short, stalwart figure who for her was the best, most beloved man alive.

"Mummy," came a child's voice behind her. "We're looking for you."

It was Ivan. He was on the porch leaning on a long twisted staff.

"We've seen everything. We've been down to the lake and we've been to the top of the hill. You can see everything all round up there. Look at the stick I found. I took it, I don't think it belongs to anybody."

He sat down on the porch and at once set about burning his initials I. S. on the staff with a magnifying glass.

"Do you like this place?" asked his mother.

"I love it. And so do Demyan and Grandad. We're never going away from here."

He looked searchingly at his mother. What would she say? But Varya said nothing. She ran her hand along the railings of the porch and with a pensive look went indoors.

No sooner had she closed the door behind her than there came a piercing whistle from behind the garden fence and Demyan appeared at the gate with a stranger, another little boy.

"Ivan. Come and catch crayfish. He says there's one under every stone."

"We ought to ask Mummy . . ." Ivan said hesitantly.

"Oh, we won't be long. It's just down at the lake."

"Well, if it's not for long. . . ." Ivan put his burning-glass in his pocket, leaned the staff against the wall and ran to the gate.

The three little boys hurried down the path, parting the broad leaves of the alder bushes before them. The setting sun cast a red light on their backs. The lake gleamed still and lovely in the gaps in the wood. An inexplicable sense of joy seized the boys who found no other way of giving it vent than to shout at the top of their voices. The distant woods returned a happy echo.

Stoletov was home late. The children were asleep. There were piles of freshly-cut sticks beside their beds; under the beds crayfish scraped and scratched in little baskets of twisted withes; on the window-sill stood a jam-jar in which minnows stirred; a beetle buzzed in a match-box. Sleep had overcome the little boys suddenly—on the table remained unsorted a pile of stones and heaps of leaves and flowers intended for a herbarium.

Stoletov stood beside the beds and looked down at his sons. They lay there with their scratched arms flung wide apart and even in their sleep their faces continued to wear a preoccupied expression. They looked very

much alike, these two sun-burned, freckled little boys asleep under their father's roof.

Oh, how glad he was to have them with him, his eagles, thought Stoletov. Eagles! He smiled at the thought but it was a smile of infinite tenderness.

A few days later Ivan Konstantinovich came to see Stoletov at the factory. The old man had shaved carefully and wore a white jacket that he put on only for special occasions; his boots shone and emitted a strong odour of polish. He walked into Stoletov's office, looking clearly agitated, and told him that he wanted to speak to him not as to a son-in-law but as to the head of the Party organization of the factory; that was why he preferred to speak in the office than at home.

"I want to state right away, Stepan Demyanovich, that I do not intend to live here as if I were on holiday. I intend to work and I am asking you to provide me with the possibility of doing so."

Ivan Konstantinovich's relations with Stoletov were of a peculiar character. The two had met many years ago at a time when Ivan Konstantinovich worked as a teacher at a railway school and Stepan as a fitter in the sheds. One day the secretary of the Comsomol organization took Stepan to the school, a large building surrounded by trees and shrubs, poplars and thick lilac bushes. In the yard—it was more like an orchard than a yard—limped a man whose face was tanned dark by the sun. He was walking along a hard-rolled yellow sand path, watching two lads watering bushes that bent under the weight of bright red roses.

"Good morning, Ivan Konstantinovich," said the Comsomol secretary. "I've brought you one of our chaps. I'd like him to meet you. You can help him. He's a bright lad, a fitter, but hasn't had much schooling. Couldn't you teach him?"

The Comsomol secretary's voice was full of entreaty and Stepan, who had never known him show the slightest fear of anyone, had heard him demand but never beg, grew nervous and stood aside.

"Teach him?" echoed Ivan Konstantinovich. "I can't do that. We don't take lamp-posts like him in the school."

"It's not schooling he wants. He wants to go to college. But he's not ready for the entrance exams. Talk to him, Ivan Konstantinovich. You'll see for yourself that the lad's no fool."

"As if that means anything. There aren't so many fools in the world, you know. Fools are exceptional. All right, I'll talk to him and see what we can make of him."

While they were talking, Stepan looked round. The two lads went on watering the rose bushes. Several little boys were weeding a border. On the porch sat a thin girl with large eyes and a wide mouth. She had some needlework in her hand; and although she kept her head bent over it, Stepan had an impression that her eyes were following his every move.

The girl was wearing a white frock; her hair was braided in plaits, and between her brows her high forehead was wrinkled with concentration. Everything about her had an air of frailty; her bare, sun-burned legs, her sharp-elbowed arms, her long neck. To Stepan she looked altogether too thin and skimpy.

The girl suddenly threw her needlework down, picked up two buckets full to the brim with water and carried them away with the greatest of ease,

without spilling a drop. She passed out of sight indoors with not even a peek at Stepan. A few moments later the sounds of music burst into the garden through the wide-open windows. Yes, they burst, not floated or wafted, these powerful challenging sounds so full of bidding, of reproach even—like a storm, like thunder.

Stepan glanced at the Comsomol secretary; he was still walking up and down the path with Ivan Konstantinovich, deep in conversation. Was he really indifferent to that music? Wasn't he interested to know who was playing? Stepan was. He walked over to the window, drew the curtain aside and looked in. At the piano sat that lanky-legged girl.

"All right, I'll leave you here," he heard the Comsomol secretary say to him. "You have a talk with Ivan Konstantinovich right away."

Stepan started back from the window. Ivan Konstantinovich gave him a rather cold look and asked him not into the house but to an arbour where newspapers and books lay on a table and the walls were hung with a collection of leaves gummed to sheets of paper, and on a stool in a corner stood a huge bunch of daisies and bluebells.

"Sit down and let's have a proper exam."

An hour later Stepan left the garden without having had another chance of seeing the girl. He felt excited and confused—apparently everything that he had learned at school had been stored somewhere in the back of his mind and had come out the moment Ivan Konstantinovich began questioning him.

"H'm, I can see that head of yours is quite retentive," Ivan Konstantinovich had said. "We'll see how it will develop later. Take these books. Prepare up to this point by tomorrow morning. If there's anything you don't understand, I'll explain it to you. But try to understand as much as you can for yourself. My time is valuable, I'm not going to waste it on lazybones."

Back in the hostel, Stepan found that he could not open his textbook as he had intended. He lay on his bed, slipped the book under the pillow and shut his eyes. At once his ears were filled with the thunder of that music, challenging, mighty, threatening. Never before had he heard such music. It was like an introduction to a new life. What kind of life? A difficult one, no doubt, but interesting and—the main thing—unknown. Would he make demands on life, or would life itself make the demands? Probably both. Well, let it be that way. If life demanded he would be ready with his reply, and he himself would demand of life all it had to give.

The music thundered on, but no one but he heard it. Everyone else in the dormitory was asleep, not realizing that a great event was taking place. They slept, unmindful of the approaching dawn, of the first glistening rays of the rising sun at the windows, by whose light young eyes could easily make out the letters in the textbooks.

Two years later, when Stepan left to take the college entrance exams, Ivan Konstantinovich's daughter Varya went to see him off. She wore a large shawl and a loose overcoat and no longer looked so thin as that first time.

They said good-bye to each other. Stepan stood near the door of the railway carriage holding Varya's hand; he was blushing and tongue-tied. He could not find the words to tell her that he hated to leave her, that he would still have been spending his evenings at the school if Ivan Konstantinovich had not told him that he was quite ready to take the exams.

"Don't waste time. Be off with you. I've plenty of other work to do and you're not the only one in the world," he had told Stepan.

"Don't worry," said Varya. "You'll pass. You'll be an engineer."

"I'm not worrying. What makes you think so?"

"There's something in your look. Something frightened."

"It's something else that worries me. . . ."

"What's that?"

He could not lie to Varya. She always guessed whether he was telling the truth or not.

"I'm afraid you'll forget me at once. You're at the Conservatoire. You're gifted. And I? We have walked together across the fields and through the woods but the winter will come and our path will be covered with frost. . . ."

"Don't be silly. Nothing's going to get frosted over. At the end of the holidays I'll be coming to town too. We'll meet. You just see that you get into the college."

He passed his exams. He and Varya met. Their friendship did not grow chill. They married while they were still students, and when they had graduated Varya started to teach at a musical school and Stepan entered the designing office of a factory.

Then came the children—twin boys. They called them Ivan and Demyan after their grandfathers. And all that—his work, his meeting Varya, and the many successful and joyous moments in his life—Stoletov considered he owed to some extent to Ivan Konstantinovich. He felt grateful to him and always tried to meet his every wish, to help him in every way, to smooth out his difficulties. Now, too, when the old man had come to him asking for work, he longed to gratify his wish. But what could he offer him? He was too old for school work—he was hard of hearing and his voice was not loud enough for him to be able to assert his authority; how could he be expected to keep the children in order when they gathered in the classroom and started making a row and fooling around? In any case, the school was closed for the holidays and Ivan Konstantinovich was unwilling to wait for work till the autumn.

"Don't think I've come to you without thinking it all over," said the old man. "I know very well it's not easy to fix an old fungus like me in a job. But I'm not asking any favours. I've got my place in life—I'm an old-age pensioner and your relative, I'm not asking for any position, it's the work I need. Surely I'm not quite useless?"

There was something childishly pathetic in the old man's eyes and Stoletov had to look down so that Ivan Konstantinovich should not see that he had noticed it.

"Useless? What are you talking about? You can be very useful," Stoletov said firmly. "Do you think you could take on some coaching at the evening school?"

"I could," Ivan Konstantinovich replied without demur.

Stoletov picked up the telephone and rang up somebody; a few minutes later an elderly man with a reddish beard entered the office.

"I'd like you to meet each other," said Stoletov, rising. "This is Vasili Nikitich. Vasili Nikitich is the director of the evening school for young workers. He's also in charge of cultural work in the factory. And this is Ivan Konstantinovich, a retired school-teacher."

Stoletov explained to Vasili Nikitich why he had sent for him. Could

he use Ivan Konstantinovich during the summer for coaching those young people who were a bit behindhand in their studies?

"Of course I can. When can he start?"

"Tomorrow, if you like," said Ivan Konstantinovich excitedly. "Or this evening."

"That's splendid. I'm delighted to hear it. May we use your office for a while, Stepan Demyanovich? If so we can go into everything without losing any time."

Stoletov cleared the newspapers off a small round table, placed it near the window and brought up chairs for Vasili Nikitich and the old man. Vasili Nikitich took out of his pocket a list of pupils, drawing Ivan Konstantinovich's attention to the case of one foundry worker who had postponed taking his exams till the autumn. Stoletov saw that the talk was well launched and turned back to his own affairs.

But before he was able to make a start on the minutes of the last meeting of the bureau, the sound of the hooter came from the depth of the factory yard. The sound floated away to a great height under the blue sunlit sky; a deep resonant powerful sound which echoed far away in the mountains and carried over the lake and the pine forest.

Stoletov enjoyed that sound. What a superb voice!

The moment the hooter went, the yard began to fill with people. The broad asphalted alleys between the shops were no longer to be seen; the saplings that lined these alleys—none of them the height of a man—were now concealed. The workers moved in a dense throng as in a May Day demonstration; a lorry that happened to meet them protested in vain with piercing plaintive sounds of its horn.

Stoletov enjoyed this dinner-break at the factory perhaps more than any other part of the day. It was a time when the small building of the Party bureau had many visitors. At the typist's table the secretaries of workshop organizations ran their eyes over the typed minutes and resolutions taken at their meetings. Propagandists collected material for their evening work. The padded door banged every minute to the acute annoyance of Maria Voronkova, the office secretary, who was driven to removing the spring and opening the door wide.

During the dinner-break no meetings or conferences took place in Stoletov's office. People dropped in simply to talk over their affairs and to meet each other and rest. This was an innovation of Stoletov's. He always tried to be in at that hour, kept himself free from business meetings and long interviews. "The hour of the open door" is what one young engineer light-heartedly called the dinner-break in the Party bureau. Maria Voronkova was deeply offended.

"As if the Party bureau door is ever closed," she protested. "People come in and out the whole day long, sometimes quite unnecessarily, and you talk about an 'hour.'"

But Stoletov liked the phrase; actually he did leave his office door wide open during the dinner-break; the draught carried off the tobacco smoke.

When he heard the hooter blow, Stoletov glanced at the two men sitting in the corner and said:

"There'll be a good many people coming in here in a minute or two. Won't they disturb you? Perhaps you'd like to move into the Party reading-room?"

"They won't disturb us," said Vasili Nikitich. "On the contrary, I'll introduce Ivan Konstantinovich to one of his future pupils. He'll probably drop in. Half the factory comes here during the dinner-hour."

And so it was. The hooter had hardly stopped when into the office burst a young draughtsman carrying a large cardboard tube. "It's finished, Stepan Demyanovich," he shouted from the door. "Look how it's come out."

He slipped a map out of the tube, unrolled it and held it up, concealing himself from head to foot. It was a map of the entire Soviet Union; in the centre was Verkhnyaya Kamenka. From Verkhnyaya Kamenka arrows pointed in all directions; some pointed to towns, others to factory settlements, and others to the coast of the Baltic and the Pacific. The longest arrow of all stretched westward from Verkhnyaya Kamenka to the Soviet frontiers, to continue to an unknown destination.

The map was coloured; green for the forests, blue for the seas and rivers, and brown for the mountain ranges. The republican capitals were marked by red stars; Moscow by a gold star and the arrows were painted bright blue.

"Splendid," said Stoletov. "There's good work for you. Let's have it up on the wall."

He clambered on to a chair; the draughtsman handed him a box of drawing-pins and soon the map covered the entire wall.

"Afternoon all," said Syurtukov as he came in. "What sort of geography's that?"

"Special sort of geography," said Stoletov, glancing over his shoulder. "The map shows the places our work goes to. Quite a sphere of influence, eh?"

He pressed down the last drawing-pin and jumped down. One after another people came in and stopped short in front of the map. They examined it carefully, praised the work of the draughtsmen and asked questions about every arrow marked on it. In the corner Ivan Konstantinovich and Vasili Nikitich went on talking quietly and keeping an ear open for what was going on in the office. The old man looked happy: at last he had broken out of his hermit's cell; he was seeing real people and hearing interesting talk.

"Who's he?" he would ask Vasili Nikitich every time a new face appeared. "And that fellow?" And he sat with his ear cupped in his hand nodding, as Vasili Nikitich told him about everyone. He liked the look of everybody but specially of Syurtukov who at once insisted that the map be hung in the first machine shop.

"Whatever you say, it's the best shop. We're still in the lead."

"Bragging, eh?" It was Lepikhin's merry voice. "You wait. You'll not be in the lead for long."

Vasili Nikitich nudged the old man.

"That's one of your future pupils," he whispered.

Lepikhin was not alone; several other men followed him into the office. All of them were equally dark in the face: as if they had been powdered by sand in the moulding process, or scorched by molten metal.

Judging from the way the foundrymen sat down with Lepikhin and listened to his words, Ivan Konstantinovich saw that his future pupil enjoyed the affection and respect of his comrades.

Vasili Nikitich told him that Lepikhin was the best moulder in the factory, that he had commanded a battery during the war and had been considered one of the bravest officers in his artillery regiment. Severely

wounded, Lepikhin was sent to a base hospital in a town far from the front. There he recovered and eventually married. His wife was a physician and when Lepikhin started to work at the factory she joined the staff of the factory hospital. Lepikhin learned his trade quickly but it was his dream to study the theory of metallurgy, to enter college and become a mechanical engineer. He lacked secondary education, however, and so this ex-officer, Party secretary and married man had to go back to school and sit at a desk with youngsters who were just out of their apprenticeship.

Even now he was carrying a school copy-book rolled up in a tube. Syurtukov noticed it at once.

"Still at it?" he joked. "Well, keep it up, it's good for you. I hear you mean to win a gold medal at school."

"I wouldn't turn up my nose at a silver one. I'll take what comes."

"And what then? Good-bye to the factory, good-bye to your job, I suppose. You'll be off to college. Well, it's the only thing you can do. With an educated wife like yours you'll have to study to keep up with her."

"I'll go to college all right," retorted Lepikhin. He ignored the reference to his wife. "But I don't intend to leave the factory. You'll have to put up with me."

Lepikhin spoke with a smile, but actually he found studying no easy task. There were books to be pored over at night, there were pressing demands of everyday life to be met. To be at the same time a leading worker in the factory, a Party secretary and one of the best pupils in his evening class cost him a considerable effort.

Stoletov had often promised to relieve him of some of his work but kept putting off doing anything about it: as it was, the shop was not working at all well, and without Lepikhin as secretary things would go from bad to worse.

But now, as he listened to Lepikhin's light-hearted banter with Syurtukov, Stoletov recalled his promises. He really ought to do something about it. Lepikhin would be going to college in the autumn—he'd have to be freed from Party work then. But during the summer he would have to keep it up. What he really needed was some help with his studies and that was what Ivan Konstantinovich was going to give him. . . .

"Everybody's studying," said Syurtukov. "I'm not against it, mind you. Knowledge is a useful thing, especially for youngsters. But what surprises me is the way our young fellows in the factory change their trades. Some want to be geologists, others teachers—they seem to be unveiling ever new talents in themselves. But I became a fitter when I was thirteen and have stuck to it ever since."

"A man needs work according to his vocation," said a young draughtsman from a corner where he had found a modest place. "That's what will happen one day. Under Communism."

"What you mean is that if we had Communism now you would stop drawing blue prints in a factory and sit somewhere painting pictures. Isn't that it?" asked Stoletov. "But what use would those pictures be?"

The draughtsman's boyish face blushed. Before he had time to reply, Syurtukov broke in:

"A man needs higher education to improve his knowledge of his trade. A young fellow starts to work as a fitter, say. All right. He studies while he works; he improves his knowledge of his trade, gets a diploma, becomes a man with higher education. But then take Nazarenko: nothing wrong with

him as a fitter, he could learn to become a fully qualified one if he liked, but instead of that he falls in love with his trombone and dreams of playing in the band."

"Why shouldn't he?" said Lepikhin. "We've quite a number of people with higher education here—foremen, lab workers and so on. But each works his own way. If a man has a bent for his job he'll work creatively. But if he just happened to get to a technical college because he failed to get into the one he wanted or because he started to work at that particular trade as a lad, then he'll not get much out of it. It's all just part of the day's work to him. Look at you. You're what might be called an average fitter," Lepikhin went on. "You haven't reached the top qualification grades. It's not because you only went to school for three years, not at all, is it? We have fitters who've had no better education than that, but who pour rationalization suggestions into workers' invention offices. They're men who think about their work every spare minute; they read only technical literature; and come Sunday they call on each other and sit over their tea and there they are talking shop again. And what about you? Every holiday you're off to the forest. Every free minute you're cleaning your gun or training your dog. What you like to talk about more than anything else is hunting and whether it's best to fish with a fly or a worm. If you were living under Communism you wouldn't stay a fitter for more than the time it takes to blink an eyelash."

"And what do you think I'd be doing instead?"

"Damned if I know. Maybe you'd be breeding silver fox. Or beavers. You'd be a zoologist and live in a preserve, racking your brains for a way of taming wolves."

"So you won't let the first shop have the map, Stepan Demyanovich," asked Syurtukov. "E-eh, you're growing mean, chief, keeping everything for yourself."

"The map's for the club. It'll be hung up there."

"Who goes to the club? Specially summer time. Let's have it if only for a bit. Nothing doing? Then I'm off."

"Now Lepikhin will go, too," said Vasili Nikitich, glancing at his watch. "The dinner break's nearly over. Let's have a word with him before he leaves."

He went over to Lepikhin and spoke quietly to him for a moment. Lepikhin rose from the sofa at once.

"This is your teacher," Vasili Nikitich said as he led him up to the old man. "Meet him and make your arrangements."

Ivan Konstantinovich shook hands with his future pupil and told him that he fully shared his views on the harmony between a man's job and his vocation. And it was true that things went wrong when that harmony did not exist, that was true in all walks of life.

The old man was glad to be able to state his opinion on the question under discussion. He would much have liked to join in the discussion at the time it was going on but felt shy; now that he was on his own with his pupil he felt more at ease.

"I'm very glad that we agree," said Lepikhin. "May I come to see you this evening? We'll talk everything over and you can examine me."

"That would suit me very well," said the old man. "Till later, then."

Lepikhin left the office; through the window Ivan Konstantinovich watched him cross the yard which was now crowded and noisy again. A

team of volley-ball players dressed in shorts and singlets, their overalls over their arms, ran past. A number of girls who had been watering a small flower bed near the path to the shops put their buckets against the wall and hurried after the volley-ball players. The hooter sounded again, clearing the yard as the doors to the shops swallowed everybody and only a few late-comers were left clumping noisily on the asphalt.

"Well, I'll leave you, Stepan," said Ivan Konstantinovich. "There's something I must do."

He went out looking happy and preoccupied. The hot noon sun stood directly over the factory. Sunlight poured into Stoletov's office and he had to let down a linen blind. He was turning over in his mind the things that had been said in his office that dinner-hour and failed to hear a light tapping on the door. A moment or two later the knock was repeated, this time more insistently.

"Who's that? Come in."

The door opened. Andrei Korolev stood there.

"I would like your advice on something, Stepan Demyanovich," Andrei said. "Have you a moment?"

"Of course. Now, what is it?"

"It's about some letters that I came across when I was sorting my files. They're from various people but they're all about the invention of engineer Kovalev. They've never been published, although in my opinion they raise big and important questions. Here they are. Perhaps you'll have time to read them."

"I'll be most interested to. Leave them with me and we'll have a talk about them tomorrow."

He glanced through the letters. One of them was neatly written and contained a small sketch done in Indian ink—clearly the work of somebody in the designing office. There were some scrawled lines in pencil signed "Sidorenko, a navvy taking part in the test." Some letters were from the assemblers of the prototype—a whole package of indignant and pressing demands. People had not forgotten Kovalev's machine, it seemed. It had been forgotten only in the head office where Stoletov's enquiry had been lying for some time unanswered.

Nikolai Mikhailovich Zhukov had not replied and Stoletov had not mentioned the machine to Kovalev again; he sensed, however, that when they met, Kovalev looked at him piercingly and with something like mockery in his eyes.

Kovalev probably thought that he had forgotten his promise. How long ago had he made that promise? The weeks had slipped by unnoticed.

2

Stoletov really had not noticed the passage of time. The days slipped by so fast that there was always something left unfinished, some plan unfulfilled, some promise unredeemed. For instance, there was that promise he had made Andrei Korolev to read those letters immediately; that had not been kept. He was called to the regional committee of the Communist Party and did not even have time to telephone to the editorial office.

At the offices of the regional committee the instructor laid before Stoletov a wad of papers fixed together with a paper clip.

"Read this through carefully and say what you think of it."

Stoletov glanced at the top sheet and at once recognized Chumov's report. It had been retyped and it was clear that few had read this copy, for its pages were clean and the edges were not dog-eared. The contents of the report, however, had not changed—all the old material was there, the only addition being a few lines at the end to the effect that all these offences and crimes had been reported to the Communist Party bureau but that Stoletov, the Party organizer sent by the Central Committee, had neither gone into the matter nor punished the offenders, but had discharged the one who fought for the truth to be revealed.

"I know all about this," said Stoletov, pushing the report aside. "We went into the matter at a meeting and considered the report to be foul slander on honest people."

"But some of the facts are true, of that we are convinced," said the instructor. "Why then did the Party bureau not take any measures?"

"Because those facts have not the slightest significance in the lives of the people concerned," snapped Stoletov.

"But a fact is a fact. It has to be analysed and weighed up. Since you did not do it at the meeting, please be so good as to write your opinion on all the points I have marked."

He handed Stoletov some paper and waved him to a chair at the desk and then left the office saying that he would return in half an hour. Stoletov angrily took the clip off the papers and, trying to keep his rising indignation under control, started to write. What damned nonsense it all was. Some petty, spiteful individual writes poisonous filth about everybody around him and then, if you please, one has to vindicate them. There was something wrong about that. Intriguers ought to be made to justify their accusations, they ought to have to prove their charges to the hilt and not oblige busy and entirely innocent people to prove their own innocence.

Stoletov rapidly wrote a brief statement that covered everything that had been said at the meeting and that he knew for himself about those people whom Chumov had tried to smear. They were decent honest people and he found it easy and pleasant to write about them. What he found more difficult to do was to explain why he had taken no notice of Chumov's warnings and had thus, as Chumov asserted, shown a lack of political vigilance. In the end he wrote nothing about himself other than the fact that Chumov's report had been taken into consideration by the bureau and that consequently a resolution was passed unanimously to discharge Chumov.

The job done, Stoletov sat drumming his fingers impatiently on the desk. Over half-an-hour had passed but there were no signs of the instructor. What should he do? Go on waiting endlessly? No, he would leave his statement and start for home as quickly as possible.

But he was unable to leave at once: in the corridor he met the comrade in charge of the industrial department, who drew him into his office to talk over various business matters. This comrade was himself an engineer-designer; he knew the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory excellently, and the conversation ran along interesting and pleasant lines so that when Stoletov at last left the Party offices he felt calm and content. Of course, it was unpleasant that people like Chumov existed but there were not many of them and they could be dealt with.

Outside it was stifling; the pavements and houses gave off a sweltering

heat, the air was foul with dust and petrol fumes; Stoletov relished the thought of returning to Verkhnyaya Kamenka.

"Home," he said to the driver. "We must get back while it's light so that we can have a swim."

"I saw our editor here, by the way," said the driver. "There he is at the bus stop."

Andrei was standing near a signboard with the words "Verkhnyaya Kamenka" on it. Stoletov at once noticed that he looked tired, affected by the heat, no doubt. Andrei stood leaning against the signboard, fanning his face with a newspaper. When the car braked and stopped beside him he was so wrapped up in his thoughts that he did not pay any attention to it.

"Going back?" Stoletov called and opened the door. "Get in if you are. That's our destination."

Andrei showed neither surprise nor pleasure at seeing Stoletov; he nodded silently and got into the back of the car.

"Where've you been?" Stoletov asked as they moved off. "Have you been in town long?"

"I came in this morning. On the first bus," Andrei spoke reluctantly. "I called at the offices of the regional paper. I was at the Party offices, too, in the press department."

Andrei spoke in an unusually dry, terse manner and, turning round, Stoletov saw that his face was glum and dark.

"What's the matter with you, old man? Not feeling ill, are you? You don't look yourself," he said solicitously.

In the same grudging tone Andrei replied that there was nothing the matter with him except that he felt tired after his day in town. Stoletov shook his head sceptically, turned round again and went on looking through the wind-screen.

They were still driving through the town, climbing a street which wound up to the top of a hill. There the houses were small and tilted against the slope; higher up rose the tower of the weather station or, as it was known locally, the observatory. The blinding sun struck the travellers straight in the face, the wind brought a fine yellow dust from the mountains.

Stoletov glanced at Andrei again. He had not moved; his eyes were shut and his face looked heavy and weary. But there was something more than fatigue wrong with him.

"Stop a minute."

Stoletov moved into the back of the car, and let the windows down on both sides; the wind came in with a whine. Laying a hand on Andrei's knee, Stoletov said peremptorily:

"Tell me what on earth's the matter?"

"It's an unpleasant business," said Andrei, averting his eyes. "Somebody suspected that I had not told the truth about myself, that I'd concealed something in the details I gave of my life. I had to go to the Party offices to write a statement explaining—well, proving that I am what I am. It's the first time anything like that has ever happened to me."

Stoletov recognized in Andrei's voice the indignation that he had felt himself in the Party offices. It was with deliberate calm that he replied.

"Forget it. You've replied—all right. There's nothing to get angry about. Some petty fellow who's suffocating with envy must have written it."

"But why do they believe a letter like that?"

"Oh, come now, it's not a question of believing it. If they'd believed it they would have taken different measures. They wouldn't have asked your advice on the matter."

"But why should I have to explain myself? Why should I be regarded with such insulting suspicion? It's not that wretched denunciation I'm so annoyed about but the fact that I have to vindicate myself."

"There are things in life more unpleasant than that," said Stoletov with a smile. "One has to reserve one's forces to deal with them. You've made your statement—all right, forget about it."

Andrei said nothing; he turned his head to the window and let the wind cool his face. His eyes were empty; he did not see how the streets they drove along had grown wider, how the houses made way for market-gardens and vacant plots of land and potato fields. In the distance rose the dark slopes of the mountain range.

The mountains rushed irresistibly to meet them. The road appeared to be about to plunge into a tunnel piercing their sides but it took a sudden turn, nestled up to the foot of the mountain and ran alongside it. Then it entered a zone of shadow rustling with the dense foliage of the birch trees. The driver took off his cap and mopped his damp brow.

"It's fine here, Stepan Demyanovich," he said, glancing over his shoulder. "Better than being in town, eh? See how the car's going—like a bird."

Stoletov smiled and nodded: it was fine and the car was certainly flying along. He called Andrei's attention to a clear, swift-flowing mountain stream which splashed down from the mountains among the boulders, roared under a bridge and reappeared on the other side of the road.

"That's the Kamenka. Pretty, isn't it?"

But Andrei had no eyes for the Kamenka. To hell with the stream, with all this beauty which now left him quite unmoved. What he would like to have done now was something quite different: he felt like knocking the block off the fellow who had had the nerve to slander him. The denunciation that he had had to reply to was type-written and bore no signature. Who could be the author of all those rotten charges? "Used influence to get the job." "Got into the Party by accident." "Some doubts whether he graduated at the University." "Obscure origin". . . His fist wouldn't take long to clear up the "obscurity" of his origin in that fellow's head.

It was all right for Stoletov placidly to admire the Kamenka and discuss the points of the car with the driver—nobody ever asked him for explanations, nobody smeared his reputation. But he, Andrei, had been smeared all right—and not only by the author of that scabby little note but by the press department worker who had made him write his statement out again, saying that swear words were out of place in a document of that nature. . . .

Yes, he would demand to be told the name of the slanderer. He would demand that the fellow be held responsible for his words. He would see that he was expelled from the Communist Party, put on trial so that no decent person would ever speak to him again. He was not going to let the fellow get away with it and go on pouring out his foul lies.

Andrei's thoughts ran on about the way he would deal with his slanderer; everything would be cleared up and the discomfited press department worker would have to tear up Andrei's statement as unnecessary.

He felt his anger subsiding; his eyes fell on a tall pine with a straight pinkish trunk, motionless on the mountain slope; beyond it reared a huge boulder fretted by the wind and then the scrub stretched on, a blur of green in the shimmer of heat.

The car lost speed—the driver, obviously, wanted to take his time over the stretch between the mountain and the valley where it was cool and shady. But relief was short-lived: a bus overtook them, leaving a trail of dust and petrol fumes.

"Should we stop for a bit?" the driver asked Stoletov, applying the brakes. "I can't drive through all this dust and stink."

He drew the car into the side of the road near a bridge over a narrow stream. The waters dashed along fussily, carrying whirling scraps of wood, splashing against the supports of the bridge, but the moment they reached the meadow they were lost in the tall grass and transformed into a quiet unnoticed brook.

The dust had settled long ago, the petrol fumes had been wafted away, but the travellers had no desire to resume their journey. Andrei ran down to the stream and swilled his face—the water was ice-cold and made his fingers ache at once. The driver strolled up to the car and began to dust it. Stoletov watched them both with a smile—how they were enjoying this halt in the shade, trying to prolong it by finding things to do.

"Well," he said to the driver. "Thinking of waiting for the next bus? They run to time, don't they?"

"It's up to you," grumbled the driver as he sat at the wheel. "You're the boss."

Stoletov called Andrei who sprang back from the stream to the road in a single bound. His face glowed from the icy water, his eyes were merry; he looked as if he had found out something interesting, something that had resolved his doubts.

"I think I'm beginning to know who wrote that tripe about me," he said when the car was running again. "It must have been your ex-editor. Vanya Poperechny warned me that Chumov would take his revenge and that's what he's trying to do. Influence! The ass, I could have got a job in Moscow if I'd wanted without anybody's influence. But Chumov could easily find himself in a real fix: what right had he to sit on those letters about Kovalev's invention? There you had people writing seriously to the paper for help but he didn't help them, oh no, he harmed them—he tried to scare the writers of those letters by alluding to some higher authorities who for some reason considered the invention to be no good."

"That was true, as a matter of fact," said Stoletov. "But whether these 'higher authorities' were right is a question I'm not at all sure about."

"So you've read the letters?" Andrei asked eagerly. "Don't you agree that they pose the question the right way?"

"I must say that I haven't read the letters carefully yet. But I know about Kovalev's invention and I'm of the opinion that it's worth having a row about. Chumov had the opposite opinion—for three reasons. First, because he's a man who knows absolutely nothing about machinery and is quite incapable of appreciating the good points of the invention; second, because he considers that to start a row with higher authorities is a vexatious and risky business—why stick your neck out?—and third,

because he was on very bad terms with Kovalev and didn't intend to do anything to help him."

"Have I your blessing in a row with those higher authorities?"

"You have," Stoletov smiled. "Especially as I've already started it though not energetically enough. If the *Tribuna* will help me I'll be delighted."

"Are you satisfied with the paper now?"

Stoletov had not expected this question. He felt at a momentary loss for words. Was he satisfied with Andrei's work? On the whole, yes. The paper had stopped printing articles with vague hints at criminal offences committed by somebody or other; people did not come any more to complain that they had been slandered. Stoletov had found his work easier since Andrei's arrival at the factory. But could that be considered a criterion for judging the work of the paper?

"Am I satisfied?" he answered. "So far, yes. I consider you've made a good start. But I expect more from you, I expect the paper to become one of the most militant assistants of the Party bureau. We badly need such a helper and the sooner we get it the better."

"And so far the paper doesn't give you that sort of help. Is that your view?"

"It doesn't hinder us and I'm grateful for that," said Stoletov frankly. "Until you came it was a real hindrance."

"That's a pretty stiff verdict, but it's a just one. I feel, too, that what I'm doing is not very important. Just the usual leading article on a general topic, short items, a feature supplied by the press bureau. . . . It looks all right but it's dull reading."

"It'll remain dull until the paper starts making a real campaign for something. For a matter of principle, of course, not on some petty squabble. Now, if you take up the cudgels on behalf of Kovalev's invention, it'll be something serious; you'll have tough opposition and some good allies, too. As soon as we get back we'll go over those letters you brought. Besides, I've some other documents to show you. As a general principle, by the way, we ought to pay more attention to the inventors among our factory workers—they're an interesting, restless lot, you know. But not everybody is able to put up a real fight for his invention—a man gets pushed aside, worn out by all the various tests and investigations; often, promises are made only to be broken and it's quite natural that a man turns sour and drops the fight for something useful. That's where we ought to come in and help him with our support, encourage him and draw him out of his shell."

"But we can't just publish general articles on the subject. We need concrete facts."

"Of course we do. And, moreover, I think those facts can be found. All you need is to make more demands on yourself and on other people, too. You wait until some glaring example of a survival of capitalism crops up, but you overlook the fact that envy and greed and complacency and other vices unworthy of man may be found in someone who at first sight seems to be a good fellow. Such a fellow thinks he's an example of all the Communist virtues but if you take a good look at him you'll see things about him that are far from pleasant. It's our job, too, to help him to see his faults and get rid of them. . . . That's particularly important here at Verkhnyaya Kamenka because our people belong to the younger gen-

eration. They're still in the formative process and anything may come out of them."

"That's just the point—anything," the driver broke in. "Take our garage, for instance, my place of work, so to speak. All the drivers are young except for one or two old hands like me. D'you think those youngsters work properly? Not on your life! They're scroungers of the first water. All they're on the look-out for is a chance of driving in to town so they make a bit on the side doing taxi work. When one of those beauties comes back his car rattles like an old can; he's got a pocketful of the ready and half a litre waiting to be downed. D'you think he realizes that a car is Socialist property? that it's something that needs to be looked after? Not he! Now, if the paper would go for them you'd be doing something useful. But you don't, do you? You just drone on with your 'Plan, plan. Over-fulfilled. Under-fulfilled.' It's dull reading and doesn't do the slightest good."

"The plan needs working for, you know," smiled Stoletov. "If the paper runs campaigns for fulfilling the plan it's because the plan's something to be respected."

"Respected, yes, I grant you that, but isn't it you I've heard talk about 'morale'? What does that mean to you; just a chap fulfilling the plan and having his mug stuck up on the honours board? But what about the fact that he goes on the booze? Oh, nobody's interested in that. No, I say that if you're going to educate a chap you've got to do an all-round job of it. If my son was like that I'd give him a good thrashing for that sort of morale. But he's not my son, so all I worry about is that the plan's fulfilled and as for the rest, it's not my business. . . ."

There was a bus coming up behind them in a cloud of dust. The driver caught sight of it in his mirror as it swung round from behind a clump of trees. Following the bus was a lorry with a load of long pieces of timber in tow.

"H'm, think they're going to pass us. I'm not going to allow that," said the driver, putting on a turn of speed. "You'll have to swallow our dust, my friends."

The car tore ahead. Verkhnyaya Kamenka was just in sight. The factory chimney railed its tail of smoke across the cloudless sky; the houses peeped through the pine trees and slipped out of sight again; a tall crane which had been installed recently on a building site slowly turned its long jib.

"We had the idea of taking up the question of the young workers' hostels," said Andrei, turning to Stoletov. "Living conditions in general. In short, the questions that were on the agenda of the Party bureau not long ago. I read the resolution but I am of the opinion that it doesn't go far enough and that it doesn't take all sides of the problem into account."

"No, it doesn't," Stoletov said. "Nearly all our young people are here on their own, without their parents; they came here to start an independent life. That's typical of new factories; we build in a new place, organize new shops and personnel. For those youngsters, new to work and new to living on their own, we have to be teachers and tutors and parents all at once. Yes, parents. We have that responsibility, too. All of us. Including you."

"Me? What sort of parent would I make?"

"I know you're a bit young for it, but the work you're doing means you've got to be that. You've got to teach and guide people the way your father did. Just you tell me how your father taught you."

"But he never did. . . ."

That was true, wasn't it? His father had never laid a hand on him, never read him sermons, seldom even swore at him. He was a fine man, a wonderful man but he hadn't done anything about "training" his son, had he?

But how, then, had he got such a firm idea of what his father considered good and what bad? What made him always try to avoid doing things he knew his father did not like? And why were his father's sparing words of praise so much dearer to him than the warmest congratulations of other people?

"He probably did teach me something," Andrei corrected himself. "But what it was I find it difficult to say. Perhaps, as a matter of fact, he still does: I always send him a copy of each edition of the paper, I'm longing to hear what he thinks of it. He'll probably criticize it. But I hope he doesn't find too many hard things to say."

"I'm pretty sure that your father had a clear idea of what he wanted you to grow up like," said Stoletov. "And according to that he either praised or disapproved of things you did. That, you see, is the entire basis of education—to know what you want to come out of it."

The happy, carefree faces of his own Ivan and Demyan suddenly swam into his mind's eye. What did he, Stepan Stoletov, want his sons to become? Gifted? Handsome? Happy? Varya thought Ivan had an unusual gift for music and saw him as a future violinist. Did he want a career like that for his son? Yes, of course.

But it could happen, couldn't it, that a son had no such gifts? It could easily happen that a man's sons follow him and remain rank-and-file workers. What should he want them to become in that case? The same as he wanted for himself—that they should make themselves useful and necessary in the line of work they chose for themselves, that they should devote themselves to it heart and soul.

"A real father takes pains to see that his son acquires a skill," he said to Andrei. "He sees to it that he learns his craft properly, that he doesn't stagnate but develops and grows up. A real father wants to feel proud of his son, and that's something we ought to wish for, too. If we do, it means making every effort to see our wish fulfilled. A father sees to it that his son is well-fed and properly clad and lives in decent conditions. He keeps him out of bad company and falling into bad ways. The influence of a good father lasts a long time: from babyhood to manhood, one might say. And we, too, ought to take an interest in all those things because the factory ought to be a real father to our young workers."

Andrei found himself thinking at a tangent; if there had been somebody at Verkhnyaya Kamenka whom his dad knew, he would never have given his son a letter of introduction to him. And if he had, it would have been just a note asking the man to give him hell if he worked badly. Perhaps it was all for the best that Nikolai had not been brought up by his father. . . .

Now the car had turned off the highway and was running along the unevenly cobbled road that led to the factory. Andrei smoothed his tousled

hair. That's right, lad, thought Stoletov; pull yourself together before going to work. And who could have taught him that but his father?

"We'll have another talk about this," Stoletov said as they parted at the door of his office. "Meanwhile think over what we ought to raise a shindy about and how to become a real father to our thousands of boys and girls. Work out something interesting and then tell me about it. I'm not clear myself about what is really needed."

Chapter Six

1

The day began badly for Nikolai.

That morning, when he came to the shop, he found that one of the young turners was having trouble with his lathe. At first the lad tried to mend matters himself, but after wasting an hour with no result, he came to Nikolai for help.

"One wouldn't think you'd been through the trainee's school," Nikolai chided him. "You studied theory, didn't you? What's gone wrong?"

He walked over to the lathe and, with a casual gesture, set it running. A fearsome grinding noise ensued. Nikolai at once switched off in alarm.

"We'll soon find out what the trouble is," he said, preserving his poise. "You should have come to me at once instead of wasting working-time."

The turner's face flushed; he watched tensely every move Nikolai made, trying to fathom what the defect was.

Thinking that nothing more serious had happened than that a shaving had dropped into some place where it should not be, Nikolai switched on several times more, but with the same appalling result.

"Just a moment," he muttered. "I'll fix it in a minute."

But ten minutes passed and then another ten minutes, and still the lathe would not run properly. His face smeared with oil, his hands scratched, Nikolai crawled underneath the lathe, examined it from all angles, but all in vain.

He stood beside the idle lathe mopping his brow. The other turners went on working calmly but Nikolai felt that they were casting looks of derision at him.

Realizing that he could do nothing with the lathe by himself, Nikolai hurried away to look for Yuri Sharov. But Sharov had left for a technical conference in town; Nikolai came back to the shop feeling thoroughly put out. Near the idle lathe stood two turners—grown-up men. They were explaining something to the embarrassed young culprit.

Catching sight of Nikolai, one of the men smiled and said: "No point in wasting all this time, comrade foreman. You ought to send for a repairer from the chief mechanic's department. You'll not manage it yourself."

Nikolai sensed an undertone of mockery in the man's voice. There was mockery, too, in the way he stressed the word "foreman," and in his ready assumption that Nikolai would not be able to repair the defective lathe himself. Nikolai flushed to the tips of his ears.

"Who gave you permission to leave your lathe?" he snapped with unusual asperity. "Be so good as to mind your own business and keep your advice for somebody else."

The man shrugged his shoulders and went back to his lathe; but the other worker laughed openly and said over his shoulder: "He can sew on buttons and mend a rent but when it comes to cutting a coat he has to send for a real tailor."

Nikolai felt so hurt that his ears rang. He wanted to retort to the quip but found nothing suitable for the occasion. He applied himself again to the lathe with a sense of helplessness that brought him to the very brink of tears. Just then he saw Andrei coming through the shop, an Andrei who walked confidently and light-heartedly with his hat carelessly tilted on the back of his head and who, it seemed to Nikolai, gave him the most perfunctory of glances.

Nikolai, who was about to run up to his friend and tell him all his woes, felt suddenly checked. It was all right for Andrei to stroll about the shop in that lordly manner. He was an editor. A fine post. But he, Nikolai, had to put up with sneers from anybody who felt like it. . . . No, he didn't want any of Andrei's sympathy.

He tussled with the lathe for almost another hour and finally had to ring up the chief mechanic's department. But his chapter of accidents was not at an end—he was told that the break-down gang was busy on an overhaul job in another shop.

"What's your little trouble? Maybe you can fix it on your own?"

Nikolai, however, did not know what the trouble was and, to conceal his ignorance, replaced the receiver without replying. He sent the young turner home and went to the chief mechanic's department to find out whether there was really no one there who could have a look at the lathe that day.

His mission was unsuccessful and he returned from it looking glum. Sitting at his desk, he tried not to look at the wretched lathe and was delighted when he saw dark-eyed Yasha Milovidov approach him with light, dancing steps.

Yasha gave him an engaging smile and said that it really upset him to see the foreman so worried about that damned lathe.

"What do you expect from our people?" he whispered confidentially into Nikolai's ear. "Machine-wreckers, that's what they are. A fellow who was a swineherd only yesterday gets a bit of training and is given a lathe to handle. Our old hands laugh, of course: here's a foreman with a diploma and he can't get a lathe to run. But don't take any notice of them. It's youth that runs this place, mainly, and youth will always back up a young foreman."

Milovidov's solicitous manner was much to Nikolai's liking but for appearance's sake he frowned; he considered saying that the sneers of the older workers left him quite unmoved, but decided not to, and went on listening.

Milovidov, still smiling, said that Nikolai was a far better foreman than others, better even than Yuri Sharov because Yuri had them all worn out with his technical studies and various innovations.

"He boasts too much and he's mad about machinery," said Yasha with much play of his jet-black eyes. "He never mixes with the young people, never asks them round and never goes out with them. . . . Now

I could tell the sort you are from the first: you don't avoid working people, you've no objections to mixing with us, have you?"

Nikolai said he had no such objections and Yasha, addressing him in the familiar second person singular, at once went on to tell him that as foreman Nikolai had made one mistake: he had not respected the old tradition of standing treat to his turners.

"Of course, you can't treat them all, that would cost too much," Yasha murmured. "But you ought to encourage the chaps you can always rely on for support. Haven't I been working all right all this time? Nobody can say that Yasha Milovidov has let the new foreman down."

What Yasha said about his work was true enough. Every day he produced considerably more than his stint, turned in work of excellent standard, came to the shop earlier than anybody else and never smoked on the job.

"You can count on me always," he whispered. "And there are other lads, too. Don't you worry about that lathe. I'll go straight away and bring a repair gang from the chief mechanic's department."

"There's no one free there at the moment. I've already been there. They can't send anyone."

"Maybe not for others but they'll find someone for you."

Yasha went off somewhere and soon after two fitters came in and quickly put the lathe in order.

"You shouldn't have sent the turner home," said Yasha. "But that's easily remedied. I'll take over his work on top of my own. Don't worry, Nikolai Nikolayevich, you won't have any trouble. Only don't refuse to come out with us. What about going to the restaurant tonight?"

Nikolai agreed joyfully and asked who else he ought to invite. Yasha mentioned Vladimir Nazarenko and another turner, saying that he would take care of the invitations.

"Straight after work, then. We'll just go home to change."

Nazarenko alone agreed to come; the other turner was busy.

"That doesn't matter," said Yasha as the three young men entered the restaurant.

The Green Mountain Restaurant was located in a two-storey building standing on its own. The large dining-room was fitted up in the manner of the best town restaurants—yellow marble pillars rose to the ceiling, the walls were hung with pictures in broad gilt frames, a low platform was occupied by the band in which the main attraction was a girl with a large accordion in her lap. The waitresses wore white silk aprons and starched lace head-dresses; the *maitre d'hôtel* wore a jacket with cut-away front looking like a morning coat.

The place was almost empty when Nikolai and his party arrived. At one table some men who had been visiting the factory on business were having supper; another was occupied by a man and woman—she young and bashful in a silk frock with a bold flower pattern, he in a spick-and-span grey suit.

"Those are our newly-weds," Yasha scoffed. "Catch me taking my own wife out to a restaurant. Not much fun in that."

Yasha behaved as if he was a regular *habitué* of the restaurant; he called the waitress by her first name and chose a table near the band. Nikolai and Nazarenko followed him obediently.

Having ascertained from Nikolai how much money he was prepared

to spend, Yasha ordered the meal. Vodka, beer, *hors-d'oeuvres*, with Siberian dumplings to follow—the job might have been an assignment of the utmost importance—so business-like was his manner, so rapt his attention.

The food was slow in coming. Yasha poured out the vodka.

"We'll start on vodka with beer as a chaser," he said. "It'll be hours before they bring the *hors-d'oeuvres*."

Nikolai looked at his glass warily. On those rare occasions when he had drunk vodka at home it was in small noggins; and, generally speaking, at student parties drinking had been confined to beer and cheap wine.

The vodka went to his head at once: long before the *hors-d'oeuvres* were served he was seeing double. The voices of Yasha and Nazarenko merged into one and he found it increasingly difficult to make out what they were saying. He firmly pushed his beer glass away from him.

"I'll have a soft drink. No beer for me."

Yasha looked at him with withering scorn but went over to the bar himself for a bottle of lemonade. Nikolai gulped down two glasses and at once felt better. He started listening to the conversation. The talk was about love and family life. Yasha was arguing that love and family life are two quite separate things, while Nazarenko asserted that only when one is in love can one settle down to family life.

"The main thing about family life is that it gives you a real friend," said Nazarenko. "I don't mean, of course, that a chap can't make friends among his comrades, but his wife is his best friend. For better or for worse. I share everything with my wife. There's nothing I can't talk to her about, whether it's about the factory or the way I feel about things. Nobody understands me as well as she does. Do you know how much I love her? Why, I could kill a man for her, if you want to know."

"You don't call yourself a husband, do you?" sneered Yasha. "Why, you don't even live together. You don't know the way your wife spends her nights. . . ."

"Shut your mug," shouted Nazarenko, springing to his feet and making as if to fling himself on Yasha. "If you say another word against Valya. . . ."

His face had suddenly turned pale, his broad brows contracted in a single line, his fists clenched convulsively.

"Steady on," said Yasha. He was still smiling. "I didn't say a word against your wife. What I was saying was that you're in a rotten position—you're in love, you have these fine feelings but you don't have any family life. Why not? Because you've got the wrong ideas about marriage and the rest of it. A man ought to marry a woman who makes him cosy, so he can come home after work and find everything nice and comfy. So he can be the boss in his own home. And what sort of a home have you got, eh? Living in a hostel like you were before you got married, and your wife living in another one. Here am I offering you my pity and sympathy and all you do is to jump on me. Sit down, let's have a drink and something to eat—look what's come. There are eggs in the salad."

He filled Nazarenko's glass up with vodka, helped him to the *hors-d'oeuvres* and smiled at him genially.

"No brawling or fighting, mind. Otherwise the comrade foreman will think that we lads don't know how to behave properly, that we can't take our drink and talk about things decently. Of course we have our scraps

now and then," Yasha turned to Nikolai, "but I don't approve of them. Why, only the other day a fellow went for me. He gave me a bruise—and people thought I was to blame. But I wasn't at all. I didn't start it. I don't like fighting."

"That's because you're a coward. You spit out some filthy remark and scoot. And your remarks are worse than bruises."

Nazarenko sat down still looking upset and out of humour, but Yasha did not seem to notice his frown and held up a glass.

"Here's to reconciliation," he said and downed his vodka in one gulp. "That's enough palaver, I'm going to listen to the band."

The band was playing a *pot-pourri* of popular songs. Nikolai, for some reason, did not like it at all: just when you started listening to some good tune the band broke off and began another one only to slide cunningly into a third after a little while. The girl with the accordion sat looking like a doll without the least expression on her stiff, painted face—and he didn't like that either.

The restaurant was filling up. At the next table sat a party of men no older than Nikolai and his companions. They waved to Yasha and asked the waitress to bring them beer. She returned with ten bottles.

"Fellows from the foundry," Yasha said with respect. "They like to swim in it."

Once more he filled the glasses with vodka, insisting that they be emptied straight away. Why not have a bit of fun instead of sitting round like old men? He shouted, tapped his knife on the edge of his plate to make the waitress hurry. She brought the dumplings in a silver tureen; Yasha served them with a large soup-ladle.

They drank to friendship, to success, to love. The band played a waltz and several pairs turned between the tables—the girls in party frocks and one of them in a long evening gown, the young men in well-cut suits with bright ties, and shiny low-topped boots.

Nikolai thought of Andrei and urged Yasha to go to the newspaper office and bring him to join them.

"Quite a glamour boy. I've seen him," said Yasha. "But why ask him now? Wait a bit. We'll walk over there later. We need a few more drinks. Dance a bit, too. What about those nice little bits over there? Should we ask 'em?"

Nikolai said no, he didn't feel like it. He had drunk enough to feel that he could confide in his new friends and he started telling them about Nina. He told them about his last meeting with her, how they had sat on a bench on the boulevard, how he wanted to tell Nina that he loved her but had not been able to get it out, how she had come to the station with a bunch of flowers and given it to Andrei instead of to him.

"Good for her," said Yasha. "A girl doesn't like a fellow who can't make up his mind. What a girl likes is not to be given any time for second thoughts. He's gone—all right, call it a day. That's just dreaming, not love. Sheer waste of time. While you're dreaming about her here, she'll get herself another fellow."

"She won't do that. She's not that sort."

"They're all that sort," Yasha said casually. "To look at them you'd think they were as quiet as mice, but they're all the same."

Jumping up, he walked round the table, went up to a girl who was sitting in a large party and asked her if she would like to dance. The girl

took the floor with him readily. That was something Nikolai did not like—a girl nestling up to one chap and then going and forgetting everything when she's in Yasha's arms, whirling between the tables.

"Nina's not that sort, I'm telling you," Nikolai said to Nazarenko. "She doesn't let anybody else touch her, and I—I don't go in for flirting. I'm not interested."

"I believe you, all right," said Nazarenko and his eyes lost their slightly tipsy look and brightened up. "Don't listen to Yasha. He always says rotten things about girls. He treats his wife badly and she's got a kid, you know. My wife's expecting a baby. I'm awfully glad. I'm really fond of my Valya. The only trouble is we haven't a room—she lives in one hostel and I'm in another. Life's hard that way. We want to live together."

"I bet you do," said Nikolai, thinking of Nina. But what if she wouldn't have him? How could he win her over?

"You've no idea what my Valya's like," continued Nazarenko. "She's clever. . . . Works as a typist in the newspaper office. I only went to trade school. Now I'm going to evening class. But I don't study well. The trombone's my ruin, Valya says. I'm terribly keen on music; I play in the band. Actually, I'm much more interested in the band than in evening classes."

"I haven't had one letter from Nina yet. And I've sent her four myself. I'll write to her again today. I'll tell her about you, about this party."

"I lost my parents in the war, you see," said Nazarenko, disregarding Nikolai. "Valya's like my own family to me. She does everything for me. Look at this shirt, she embroidered it for me. She cooks my dinner—I go and have it in her room in the hostel. I give her all my wages. We've bought a dining-room suite but there's nowhere to put it. Had to leave it in store. . . . All the same, they ought to give us a room because of the baby—we can't go on like this. . . . They've got to do something. . . . They build those hostels but there are lots of young people married like Valya and me."

They went on talking about their own lives, not listening to each other. Yet they enjoyed this conversation and when Yasha, after seeing his partner back to her place, returned to the table, they were sorry to have to bring it to an end. But there was no option—Yasha at once kicked up a fuss; the food was cold, they weren't drinking their vodka fast enough, they needed more beer.

"See that bit of stuff?" he asked, nodding towards the next table. "Hot dancer. She's not from the factory. Lives the other side of the lake. The boys are from there, too. Rowed over. I tried to get her to come for a stroll with me afterwards. Said she's game but she's scared the boys would tell her mother."

"You're not scared that somebody would tell your wife, I suppose," said Nazarenko harshly. "Not very nice for her to find out that you're strolling in the park at night with a girl you've picked up somewhere, is it?"

"If you're going to be scared of your own wife you might as well be dead. I'm not going to spend my time getting browned off at home. My motto is: earn money and enjoy yourself!"

"Then you shouldn't have got married. Just to make a mess of someone else's life. You could have fooled around on your own then."

"My marriage was the result of tragic circumstances," said Yasha mysteriously. "You don't know anything about it. It's not for you to judge."

He pulled a gloomy face and tossed down a glass of beer. Was there really some tragedy in Yasha's life, wondered Nikolai. He felt sorry for the chap. In fact, he felt sorry for everybody—Yasha, Nazarenko, himself. . . . Tears came to his eyes, he wanted to say something that would express sympathy; he wanted the others to console him in his own sorrow.

The band was playing a melancholy air; the girl in the band placed her accordion on the floor and rose to sing. Her voice was low and husky, her face as expressionless as ever, but now it seemed to Nikolai that she was singing beautifully, with exquisite taste and the most profound emotion.

The restaurant was stuffy; Nikolai's head swam. If he could only go outside into the fresh air and find Andrei and tell him everything: how unhappy he was to think that Nina had forgotten him and grown sick of him; how unfair it was that Nazarenko and his wife were forced to live apart though they had bought a dining-room suite and there was a baby on the way; how wrong it was to criticize Yasha because in his private life there were "tragic circumstances."

Nikolai looked longingly towards the window. The white silk curtains stirred faintly in the light breeze; outside it must be cool and still. But here in this stuffy place the hum of voices, the clatter of dishes and the noisy music merged into a hateful din.

"Should we go?" he said irresolutely. "I've got a bit of a headache. We could go for a walk in the park."

Yasha had no intention of leaving.

"Want to go for a walk, do you?" he said testily, a vicious expression creeping into his face. "Grudge spending your money on us, do you, comrade engineer? That's not the way to do things here. One round of drinks and then home! Oh no. When we go to a party we expect something serious, not some half-hearted do."

"That may be your way," said Nazarenko, "but why should you take it on yourself to speak for the whole factory."

"I'm speaking for all those fellows who are worth anything. Not for those who are tied to their wives' apron-strings. I'm speaking for the real men. Order some more, comrade engineer. Have you got enough money left?"

Nikolai dug into his pockets and put on the table all the money he could find.

"Here you are. That's all I've got. Count it, order something and settle the bill yourself."

Yasha counted the money and nodded approvingly.

"Enough and more for us to drink till dawn. Now, let's see. . . ."

But Nikolai suddenly stood up and staggered across the room which now seemed much bigger; he passed the empty tables, the band.

He had to have some air. He would go outside, he would walk to the factory for Andrei, who would probably still be working. He would bring Andrei back to the restaurant, introduce him to Yasha and Nazarenko and then the four of them would sit together. With Andrei beside him everything would be better and clearer, the pillars would stop rocking,

the noise would die down and that grey-haired man with the familiar sun-burned face at the next table would no longer look at him with that unfriendly, mocking expression.

What was that man thinking? That Nikolai was drunk? He wasn't the slightest bit drunk. He would walk past that man as steadily as could be, with his head high, independent and calm as befitted an engineer.

He reeled but managed to grasp the back of a chair and steady himself. The grey-haired man went on looking at him disapprovingly. But Nikolai summoned up all his will-power and strength and, taking his bearing on the door, quickly crossed the room.

The diners saw a pale-faced young man with ruffled hair and eyes riveted on one point ahead, making his way across the restaurant floor. The young man looked pitiful; he would surely fall if he bumped into anything.

Yasha, who was dancing unwittingly, touched Nikolai's shoulder. Yasha was dancing badly, shuffling his feet and turning aimlessly on one spot.

The waitress cleared the table and removed the beer-stained cloth.

"Would you mind settling the bill?" she said to Yasha when he returned from seeing his partner to her table. "We're closing."

Yasha handed the girl some crumpled notes. He tossed the change carelessly on the table.

"That's for you," he said. "Sorry for the trouble. . . ."

With a grimace the waitress picked up the soiled notes and put them in the pocket of her apron.

2

Andrei leaned over the table and ran a critical eye over the page schemes of the next number of the paper. Not a sign of anything lively in it. Leading article about the building of a new block of flats. Vanya Poperechny had written it with the help of an official statement. It listed the building teams, referred to their successes and to the fact that they had outstripped their plan.

That they probably had done. Vanya had, no doubt, avoided making any mistakes in the names of the best building workers; all the same, the article was more like a report by a clerk of works than an editorial—it posed no questions, criticized nobody, led nowhere.

"Is it really worth making a leading article out of that construction job?" Andrei asked. "Perhaps it would be enough if we kept it to the news columns."

But Vanya stuck up for his article: the block of flats was an important matter, everybody was waiting for it to be completed and everybody would find the editorial interesting.

"Interesting? I wonder. . . . All right, let it go."

Below the editorial there was a space for a feature article about the building in question. It was signed "Potapov, bricklayer," but Andrei heard Vanya dictating it straight on to the typewriter from his own notebook.

There was to be an illustration in the middle of the page. On the scheme there was the word "picture." Below it, four short articles on various topics.

"What picture are we using, Vanya?"

Vanya leaned over the scheme as if hoping to find there something that Andrei had missed, and said casually:

"We'll decide that when we get a proof. We'll see what'll fit."

What would fit! That was the way the whole page was made up. Twenty lines here, thirty there. But where was the basic material? The stuff that really mattered? The kind of article that Stoletov and he had been talking about.

"We can't put the paper out like this." Andrei pushed the scheme aside. "We must think about something better to lead off with."

"Then we'll be out late. We're behind time as it is."

"All right, we shall be late," Andrei said stubbornly. "I'm not going to pass the paper as it is now."

Vanya frowned and pondered, turning over in his mind what the paper could lead on.

"I'll pop along to the workers' inventions office and get two or three more items out of them. We might write up something for the head of the office to sign; he promised he would."

Vanya picked up a notebook, put a sharp point to his pencil and was about to leave the room when Andrei stopped him.

"Drop this habit of writing other people's stories for them, please," Andrei said irritably. "Ask the head of that office to write the article himself. Your job is to get other people to write, understand? You can help them with advice on how to write but I want you to stop writing things yourself and then shoving other people's names under them."

"But nobody will write for us," Vanya said confidently. "Everybody's busy with his own affairs. What's more, we don't pay. Our fellows say it's better to write for the regional newspaper: it pays, and gives you the feeling of being a real writer."

"You ought to tell them that a real writer's not primarily interested in his fees. Go and talk to them and give them a few days to get something ready for us."

Vanya shook his head sceptically and went out. He would try, of course, but what would come out of it he didn't know.

After another scrutiny of the page schemes, Andrei went straight to Stoletov. Perhaps he had sorted out the material for the campaign on the Kovalev invention. But Stoletov was not in; his desk was occupied by Vasili Nikitich, the cultural worker, who, when consulted by Andrei, replied that the main thing to stress in the paper was the importance of political studies.

"Our results weren't bad last year but we mustn't grow smug. We must go on hammering in the same point. During the summer everybody grows lazy and abandons his books and exchanges them for fishing-rods and so on."

"Perhaps you'd care to write us an article on the subject. Just a short one, a page and a half of typescript."

"I'll write it. You're not giving me much room, of course, but I'll do my best."

While they were talking, Lyuba Zvonaryeva came in and sat down on the sofa. Andrei looked at her hard; he had met this pretty girl several times.



Sensing his glance, Lyuba turned to the window. Andrei resumed his conversation with Vasili Nikitich.

"I'd like something with a bit of snap in it," he said. "Maybe you could take one workshop and write about a particular order."

Lyuba, who had hitherto been silent, suddenly grew alert.

"I've a splendid letter here about one order," she said. "In my opinion, we ought to draw everybody's attention to that order and finish it ahead of delivery date. But nobody's paying any attention to the letter."

"What letter are you talking about?" asked Andrei. "What's the order?"

"The letter is addressed to our Comsomol members and to all our young workers. The order is equipment for the oil industry."

"For the oil workers?" said Vasili Nikitich. "We can do something about that. True, it's not much of an order and hasn't come in for much attention. But it's worth while, especially if there's a letter."

"Please show me the letter, there's a good girl," said Andrei, rising quickly to his feet.

"That's a queer way to talk. I've got a name, haven't I?" the girl snapped. "It's Zvonaryeva. I'd have thought you'd have remembered. I'll show you the letter, but what do you intend doing with it?"

Andrei lost no time in telling her his plans: he would print the letter in the middle of page one and devote a leading article to the subject,

going into the question of how work on the order might be speeded up. In the next issue he would print a reply and, if it could be arranged, pledges by the shops, teams and individual workers.

Lyuba listened attentively, occasionally nodding her pretty curly-haired head.

"Come along to the Comsomol committee office, Comrade Korolev," she said. "I'll let you have that letter."

The letter was interesting. It told how young workers lived and worked in the steppes of Bashkiria where during the war vast oil deposits were found in the Devonian System about two kilometres deep. It described how in a barren place that used to be known as Devil's Field, a "Second Baku" had been developed, how in the early days people lived in tents and dug-outs but were now building beautiful new towns, and how important it was for the oil-field to get the equipment that was being made at Verkhnyaya Kamenka.

"We are writing to ask your Comsomol organization to take an interest in our order," the letter concluded. "We are asking your young metal workers to help our young oil workers."

"We'll print it on the front page with a bold headline," said Andrei. "The paper's coming out tomorrow; we'll spend the night in the print-shop if need be, but we'll manage it all right. If you like we can go along together now and settle the whole lay-out and choose the type."

Lyuba felt like saying that she did not understand anything about type and had not the least idea what a lay-out was, but Andrei was so certain that she would be interested in these things that he did not even wait for her consent—he simply got up and moved towards the door. So Lyuba went with him, deciding that as the letter was Comsomol business it was up to her to help the paper as much as she could.

Besides—and this was something Lyuba did not admit to herself—she liked Andrei. As she followed him to the print-shop she stole a glance into a pocket mirror and straightened her hair.

The italic type turned out to be small and badly worn. To set the letter in it would be disastrous, so Andrei gave instructions for it to be set in the usual type but leaded and framed with a double rule.

Lyuba looked round the print-shop with interest. The glum-looking printer was again engaged in printing some announcement by the housing and general amenities office, a girl comp. was setting an article about new acquisitions by the library. Matter which had already been set and held over stood tied up with string in rows on the make-up "stone."

By the time Vanya Poperechny returned and announced that he had asked the chief of the workers' inventions office to write an article, the entire front page had been re-schemed. In the middle, occupying a full half of the page was the letter, and above it Andrei had written in bold lettering: "We Must Deliver the Oil Workers' Order Ahead of Time."

"What we need is a very short editorial, appealing to our young workers to answer that letter," said Andrei. "And we need at once material from the first machine shop about the way work is going on that order. We'd like you to write the editorial, Lyuba, while Vanya and I go along to the first shop. I'd go on my own but I don't know anybody there and we haven't much time."

Lyuba's first reaction was to say she did not know how to write editorials, that she had never written one in her life. But she agreed and

went reluctantly to the Comsomol committee office—to think. Just as Andrei and Vanya were about to leave the office, Valya, the typist, who had hitherto taken no part in all the excitement, said:

"It's all very well your bringing in copy but who is going to set it? If you're relying on Tamara and the other case-hand, you'll never get the paper out by tomorrow. It'll take them till this time tomorrow to set it."

"That's true," said Vanya. "We're going to use practically nothing of what we've got standing; it'll mean a lot of setting and they're horribly slow. What can we do about it?"

He looked at Andrei in despair but Andrei knew no more than Vanya did about what ought to be done. Would they really have to hold up the paper another day?

He sat down again, stared at the page scheme and wondered how to get out of this fix. Valya looked with sympathy at the distracted editor. The whole letter affair was very much to her liking. As she typed a copy of the original letter she imagined the oil-field town just as she had seen one on the screen: a forest of derricks, white buildings and, in the distance, the sea and yachts with big sails gliding across it. She knew that there were neither sea nor yachts in the steppes of Bashkiria, but the town must be even more lovely than the one in the picture because it was new. . . . And now that letter could not be published on time.

"Comrade Korolev," said Valya, "I'll try and get a comp. for you. I don't know whether she'll agree but I'll do my best to persuade her."

"Are you thinking of Polina?" asked Poperechny. "You'll waste your time crawling before her. She won't come. When she left she said she'd never set foot in the place again."

"Oh, she did, did she?" Valya said scornfully. "She talked that way because she was angry with Chumov. Now it's different. She belongs to the Comsomol, doesn't she? This is a Comsomol matter."

Valya rose, smoothed her checked blouse and asked Andrei whether she could go.

"Of course, Valya. You'll be our salvation if you talk this Polina over," said Andrei, handing Valya her shawl and bag. "Hurry up. Tell her that we're all begging her to come—the editorial office and the Comsomol committee. If she can't manage to come during working hours, let her come in the evening, it doesn't matter how late. We'll wait for her."

"Working hours, indeed," Valya snorted. "She's a hostel warden. If we could only get her to do it, if only she'll agree. . . ."

Valya waddled out of the office.

No sooner had the door closed behind her than in came the glum-faced printer. Without addressing or looking at anybody in particular, he said:

"It isn't my job to work at night. I'm knocking off at the usual time. That means you'll have to find a printer, too."

Poperechny looked at the printer with alarm: the printer leaned against the door jamb, smoking and carelessly dropping ashes on to Valya's typewriter.

"Where are we going to find one?" Poperechny faltered. "You know very well that there's not another printer in the whole factory."

"That's not my affair."

He dropped some more ash on Valya's desk and turned on his way back to the print-shop.

"Tidy up that mess you've made with your cigarette ash," said Andrei in quiet level tones. "That's to begin with. And then get your press ready for night work. That will be all for the present."

Poperechny looked round. He saw an Andrei he did not recognize: the pleasant, open face of a moment before had become stony, the brows had contracted, the eyes grown cold and hard as they bored through the printer. For a moment the printer was at a loss; his face lost its self-confident expression. He leaned forward and blew the ash off the paper on Valya's desk; but then he recovered his poise and mumbled:

"You've no right to make me work overtime. Overtime's voluntary. It needs a special agreement and a bonus."

"Did you hear me? I told you to get your press ready. I'm not going to argue with you."

Andrei put on his hat, picked up a notebook and turned to Poperechny.

"Let's go. We must try and collect our copy before Valya gets back."

As they went out they passed the printer, ignoring him completely; he drew back astonished to let them by.

"That was marvellous," said Poperechny when they were outside in the square. "You put him in his place all right. He's a poisonous old fellow. He knows he's the only printer in the place so he thinks he can get away with anything."

"He won't get away with anything else, I can assure you. If he doesn't come to his senses, I'll charge him with obstructing the work of the office."

Andrei spoke confidently but, actually, there was little confidence in his heart. What if the printer fulfilled his threat not to do night-work?

Oh, to hell with him, he thought. He and Poperechny between them could handle the press. It couldn't be all that hard; they'd get the paper out somehow.

They entered the first machine shop and walked along the gallery that ran up the middle. Large rooms opened on to it, occupied by the shop organizations. On the broad corridor were doors bearing glass plates with glittering gold letters on them. The first one read: "Shop Manager A.M. Kovalev."

Andrei felt his heart contract slightly: how would Kovalev treat the representative of the factory newspaper? His relations with Chumov had been bad, the paper had not supported his invention, hardly an issue passed without some digs at the manager of the first machine shop.

Andrei would gladly have walked past the door, leaving the interview to Poperechny. He glanced over his shoulder. Poperechny had stopped just behind him and was running a comb through his curly hair. He looked nervous. There was nothing for Andrei to do but pull himself together, master his uneasiness and firmly open the door.

The office of the shop manager had a large window overlooking the shop. It resembled a balcony from where the chief could command a view of the whole place. One side of the window was open and through it could be heard the clatter of the lathes, like the roar of the angry sea.

You'd think he was on the captain's bridge, Andrei said to himself, looking at Kovalev who had his back turned to the door as he watched something going on down below in the shop.

In his blue jacket with brass buttons, the keen-eyed, deeply-tanned

Kovalev did resemble a sailor. He turned slowly as Andrei and Poperechny walked in and looked at them in silence.

"We are from the factory newspaper," said Andrei. "This is Comrade Poperechny, the editorial secretary. I'm the editor. . . ."

His voice sounded hoarse. Could it be from excitement? He cleared his throat and at once started to tell Kovalev about the letter from the young oil workers and of their request for their equipment to be delivered ahead of time.

"We would like to know what possibilities you see of speeding up that job."

Andrei still had that rasping feeling in his throat and as soon as he had finished he looked for a water jug. It stood on a table in the corner. Trying to keep calm, Andrei walked across to it and poured himself a glass of water.

Kovalev eyed him narrowly, weighing up every movement; then he pushed aside a few folders on his desk and said tersely:

"There are plenty of possibilities." Then, after a brief pause: "That is, if all the shops apply themselves to the matter."

He listed the reasons why the order was crawling at caterpillar speed from one operation to another: faulty planning inside the factory—according to the present plan several different parts had to be worked on the same machine—what was needed was a strict system of priorities. The designers had made an error in one part and this had been discovered only after the part had been made. Three machines in the shop were held up, waiting for repair.

"Those are what you might call the objective reasons," concluded Kovalev. "I can tell you some subjective ones, too."

His expression was bored: he was tired of talking on the subject or else he considered it a sheer waste of time to talk to the press. As he spoke he kept getting up and looking out of the window: there was something happening in the shop that worried him.

From time to time people put their heads round the door. Each time that happened, Kovalev told the man that he was engaged and asked him to call later. Andrei felt that Kovalev was impatient for the moment when he would be rid of him and could turn at last to real matters.

He felt hurt and put his notebook away.

"Perhaps you would write a small article for us, mentioning all those points," he said. "Your opinion on the factory as a whole."

"Oh no. You leave me out of it," Kovalev smiled. "Why should I write in the paper? I can take my complaints to the factory manager."

There was a superior note in Kovalev's manner; Andrei flushed to the temples.

"I don't see how an article by you in the paper would hamper you in your talk with the factory manager. We are coming out tomorrow; the article will be read in the shops as well as in the managerial offices. It will make people think. It can give a jolt to a great number of people at once. I am afraid you underrate the importance of the printed word."

The tickle in Andrei's throat had gone; he spoke firmly and loudly, and Kovalev glanced at him with interest. Andrei caught the glance but did not flinch; unsmilingly he met Kovalev's eyes. He was really angry and wanted the other to know it.

Kovalev noticed it.

"Underrate the printed word?" he echoed. "If the word's precise and business-like, I value it very highly. But do you really want me to write the article? Couldn't you work up our talk into an interview?"

Andrei was going to raise objections but at that moment the door opened once more and Kovalev nodded to the new-comer to stay.

"Very well, then," said Andrei. "I'll write it as an interview. But would you mind coming to the editorial office in two or three hours' time and running your eye over it?"

"All right," Kovalev assented and shouted to his visitor. "Come in, come in, I'm expecting you."

A young worker came in holding a small casting and a blue print; Kovalev at once became animated. He switched on a bright lamp that stood next to his desk, unrolled the blue print and pored over it.

Glad to have got rid of us, thought Andrei as he returned to the floor of the shop down the broad staircase. So he didn't believe in the usefulness of the paper. Wasn't interested in the article, not in anything the paper was doing. A bad business. . . .

He felt he would like to see Nikolai. But then Nikolai would not be interested in newspaper matters. How was he getting on at his work this afternoon? The turning lathes—Nikolai's section—lay quite near the windows. The men and women who manned them were really only boys and girls. Two lathes were idle, with several workers standing round them. Among them he recognized Nikolai. Squatting on his haunches, he was craning his head under a lathe and fixing something. There was another man in the same position beside him.

Andrei walked past the group without stopping. Farther on he saw Dusya. She was standing beside a welding set, her eyes intent on the narrow pink joint in the metal, her face tense and serious.

Andrei felt a twinge of envy as he watched these people: among them were men and women who had distinguished themselves in various ways, while all that was left for him to do was to write about other people's successes.

In this frame of mind he entered his office. Lyuba ran up to him.

"I've written it. But I don't know if it's any good. I haven't had it typed yet. Please have a look at it."

The girl's face was all excitement. She put in order a number of pages with many corrections and blots and looked vexedly at Valya who launched forth on a detailed description of how she had gone to Polina, how Polina had cursed the paper and repeated her threat never to set foot in the editorial office again, but how, at length, she had consented to come at four o'clock.

"She's very touchy, Comrade Korolev," Valya added. "Please don't forget that when you see her."

"I certainly won't forget it," said Andrei. "And thank you for all the trouble you've taken, Valya."

Andrei read Lyuba's editorial and commended her highly for it. They quickly chose a suitable headline; Lyuba hurried back to the Comsomol committee room to dictate the work to a typist, and Andrei turned to his interview with Kovalev.

He worked for over an hour on it. He took more pains with it than he had ever done with an exam paper at the university. He wanted

Kovalev to like the article. Time and again he made corrections as he searched for the most telling phrases.

At length he telephoned to Kovalev.

Half an hour later Kovalev entered the office, read the article carefully, added a word or two here and there and set his sprawling signature at the end of it.

"Well done. It would have taken me three days to write this."

"So we can print it not as an interview but as an article by you?" Andrei asked. He looked delighted. "Next time, though, please write it yourself."

"If any good comes of this article, I will. When did you say you are coming out? Tomorrow. Send me several copies, please."

Valya showed Kovalev out of the office with admiration written all over her face. For the first time since she had worked on the paper the manager of the best shop in the factory had come to the office. And that was the work of this new editor, Andrei Borisovich. Such a thing could not have happened in Chumov's time.

Nor would Polina ever have come back to the print-shop if Chumov had been there. On the stroke of four the door burst open and Polina appeared on the threshold. Valya noticed at once that Polina had taken a lot of trouble over her appearance before coming. She wore a new silk frock, light-coloured shoes, and sheer silk stockings. Her hair lay in curls and from her ears dangled crescent-shaped ivory ear-rings. Her lips were painted, her nose carefully powdered.

Polina struck a pose at the door. Here I am, take a good look at me, her haughty glance seemed to say. I'm no trainee, no Tamara whom no respectable case-room would trust to "dis." type. I'm a qualified worker. I know what I'm worth and I don't allow anybody to underrate me.

Interpreting that glance correctly, Andrei stood up and walked across the room towards the visitor.

"Polina Georgievna, isn't it?" he said. "My name is Korolev. I'm the editor. Please come in."

He showed Polina to a chair. Valya nodded approvingly: that was exactly the right way to handle the proud and touchy Polina.

"Thank you for coming," Andrei said. "We'd be quite lost without you here."

He told Polina about the oil workers' letter, showed her Kovalev's article and asked her to step into the print-shop and decide how the letter could best be set up. As they walked into the print-shop Polina cast a patronizing look at the printer who watched her with extreme distaste; she embraced the two trainees.

"Hello, my pets," she said. "Why do you never come to see me? I miss you terribly, you know."

The girls looked at her with adoration although she immediately scolded them roundly for various technical shortcomings.

"Such a marvellous letter and you set it as if you were doing coupons for the canteen. Comrade Korolev, we've got a new type, awfully pretty. Let's set it in that."

She quickly found the cases which no one in the print-shop except her knew about, placed them on a free table and took the manuscript from Tamara.

"I'll set a few lines," she said, adjusting her composing-stick. "We'll pull a proof and see whether you like the type-face. I think you will. It'll stand out from all the rest of the page."

"I'm sorry for your dress, Polina Georgievna," said Andrei. "Perhaps we could ask Tamara to run and get you overalls?"

"My dress? Oh, that doesn't matter," said Polina with a shrug that set her ear-rings dancing. "Will one of you girls find me a big sheet of paper and pin it round me. That's the way. Now my dress is safe."

Polina's fingers darted from type-case to composing-stick; Andrei heaved a sigh of relief.

They were delicate fingers which curved slightly as they closed lightly on the type. It seemed to Andrei that she was bound to be making many mistakes for as she worked she chatted with the two girls without looking at the case. But he said nothing and went off to his office: mistakes can be corrected, the main thing was to have something to make mistakes on!

"Is she working?" Valya whispered conspiratorially as the door closed behind him. "That means she'll stay. She's had enough of the hostel as it is and only needed to be asked to return. You treated her like a Stalin Prize winner."

There was not a single mistake in the first galley-proof that Polina laid before Andrei shortly afterwards. It was a piece of type-setting that would have done credit to any newspaper; each paragraph opened with a fine drop letter.

"That's first-rate. It's wonderful!" Andrei enthused. "Now we'll have to revise the setting of the whole page. We can't have anything mediocre along with this work of art."

"I'll look it over," said Polina. "You attend to your business and I'll look after mine. . . ."

Her paper apron creaking as she walked, Polina returned to the print-shop. Andrei consulted Valya about how to get Polina back for keeps.

"It would suit us very well. But will her chief let her leave the hostel?"

"He certainly will," said Valya. "She's been nagging him all the time for some special curtains and table-cloths she wants for the hostel. He'll be glad to get rid of her. Of course, the girls in the hostel will moan about it."

When the hooter went at five o'clock the printer came out of the print-shop and, averting his eyes, said to Andrei:

"The printing-press is in order, Comrade Korolev. I'll go and have my dinner while the comps. are finishing their work."

The man might have been asking a favour. Or was that only Andrei's imagination? Anyway, he replied drily:

"You may go. Please be back punctually at seven."

Mouth agape and fingers at rest on the keyboard of her typewriter, Valya watched the printer's face. That was a lesson in the different ways you had to use to influence people: a chair and polite words for one, a rebuke for another.

Page two was filled almost entirely with material that had been standing in type. Andrei reread and corrected the articles and became so absorbed in his work that he did not notice that the daylight had faded, that the glum-faced printer had returned to the print-shop and that Valya, having finished her work, remained sitting at her desk waiting patiently to catch his eye.

At last Valya coughed tactfully, once, twice; Andrei raised his eyes from the proofs.

"Why are you sitting there, Valentina Ivanovna?" he asked, feeling guilty for having kept her after working hours and with nothing to do, at that.

"I thought there might be something else," said Valya, hurriedly gathering up her things. She slipped the cover on her typewriter and put her papers away in the desk. "You can send Vanya for me if you need me later. I live quite close."

In the print-shop the printer had taken a first pull of the front page; everybody crowded round the table to see it.

"Comes out dull," said Polina. "We need a block that fits the subject, something with oil derricks."

"I don't know where we can get one," said Andrei. "We've nothing of Bashkiria in stock."

"It needn't be Bashkiria," said Polina. "Any oil derricks and such-like would do. Just to catch the eye. . . . I'll find one—we used to have some pictures of Baku. Where do you keep the old half-tones, girls? Come and look through them."

They rummaged for some time in the cupboard where the blocks were kept; at length they chose one.

"Please let me have a pull from this," Polina said to the printer. "It's been lying about for half a year unused."

The illustration met with general approval. Even the printer had a good word for it and pulled several copies for himself on art paper.

Polina started making up the second page, squabbling all the time with Vanya, who was in difficulties about cutting an over-long article on new books in the library. He urged Polina to reduce the size of type in the headlines.

"If you make it smaller we'll get everything in," he argued. "It's absolutely impossible to cut this."

"Obviously," said Polina caustically. "If it was about anything else but the library, you'd soon find something to cut."

Taking advantage of his impartial position, Andrei took a pencil and slashed a whole paragraph. It made Vanya wince but Polina gave a smile of satisfaction and in a flash lifted the deleted lines out of the form.

"That's perfect. And you thought we should reduce the headlines! Girls," she turned to the trainees, "you can knock off now."

Then she suddenly remembered herself.

"I'm sorry, Comrade Korolev. I quite forgot that I'm a visitor here."

"I'd be glad if you agreed to stay and take charge," said Andrei. "Tomorrow morning I'm going straight to your chief to try and capture you from him."

"I wish you luck," said Polina with a fetching smile, and at once set about tidying up the print-shop with the two girls. Rolling up her sleeves and tucking up her frock, she dusted the tables, swept the floor and put some order into a pile of useless packing cases in one of the corners. Even the printer did not escape—she made him carry the cases outside.

Polina fixed a strong lamp into a socket and made a large shade for it out of paper. The print-shop at once became spacious and light.

"Now we can work," she said with satisfaction. "With all that rubbish lying about, the place didn't look like a print-shop."

Andrei and Vanya were reading the proofs and the printer was about to set his machine running when into the office hurried Voronkova.

"Excuse me, Andrei Borisovich—er, Comrade Korolev," she began hurriedly. "I do hope I'm not too late. Is there still time to do something? Went clean out of my head. Remembered it only when I got home. He told me to give it you this morning. Brought it to my room himself. . . . Oh, I'll catch it."

She handed Andrei an envelope and went on to say that Stoletov had brought it to her that morning before leaving with the factory manager. There was an article in it. He had asked her to take it to the editorial office at once with the message that if the article was considered suitable it should be published in the next number of *Tribuna*.

"It's too late anyway," said Vanya angrily. "Look, the paper's in proof. Where do you think we're going to print it?"

"We'll find room for it," said Andrei who had run his eyes over the article. "Thanks, Masha."

It was an open letter to the editor of the paper about Kovalev's invention. It told briefly what kind of a machine it was and how it could be used. It concluded with an appeal to the factory manager and the chief engineer: "It is high time that the management paid some attention to this invention of Engineer Kovalev's and raised with the Ministry the question of including it in the production plan. Our comrade has invented a machine that can contribute much to the national economy, as is proved by the countless documents and reports of its performance."

The letter was signed by a number of designers, including the chief of the designing office. Underneath, Stoletov had written: "Andrei Borisovich! There's no need to publish all the letters but, if you can, publish this one. I shall try to get you a reply from the factory manager and the chief engineer."

Andrei drew his pencil through Stoletov's note and handed the sheets to Polina.

"Can you manage this?"

"Must, if it's needed. Tamara, set this headline. Get a move on, now. Take a note of it: 'Forgotten Invention'—and underneath in smaller type: 'Letter to the Editor.' Don't worry, Andrei Borisovich, it will be ready in a quarter of an hour. . . . You work out what we ought to scrap to make room for the article. It'll take forty lines."

"We'll have to kill the item about new books," said Andrei, "It's just forty lines."

He ran his pencil through the article; Vanya sighed and shook his head. Back into stock. He could just hear Lusya, the chief librarian, saying disdainfully: "Your promises are not to be taken seriously. You're not reliable; you've no authority." But what could he do if the article about Kovalev's invention was really more interesting than the list of the latest books?

Page two, with the new article in its place, was locked up again; the printer switched on and the first copies of the edition began to flutter from the press with a soft rustling sound. It was quite a modest sheet—two pages—but its birth was an event; tomorrow it would reach the public and arouse various emotions, thoughts, actions.



Andrei walked out of the print-shop; alone, quite alone in his office, he read through the whole edition once more, from the title to his signature at the bottom of the last column. His was the responsibility for everything that appeared in the paper, the responsibility that no single word had been written in vain.

How many more editions would it be his lot in life to pass for publication? Many, no doubt, but he would never forget this modest factory newspaper. He would remember every detail: the green, cracked lampshade on his desk, the noise of the press in the next room, the tired faces of

Polina and Vanya and his own keen longing to share his excitement with someone. . . .

"Dad," he wrote in the margin of the newspaper. "I put out this edition today. Do read it. I'm well and happy. Andrei."

He folded the paper into an envelope and addressed it to the house and street in Moscow where he was born and grew up.

The printer soon completed the whole run: the press behaved itself, everything was ship-shape, the newspapers lay in neat white piles in the brightly lit print-shop. Andrei shook hands with the printer, switched out the light, locked the door and went outside. The dark warm night closed about him. A shooting star described an arc on the sky and vanished somewhere behind the mountains. A cool breeze off the lake fanned Andrei's flushed face. The world was vast and kind; it felt good to be alive.

*Bu'lgaria's a marvellous land
But Russia's best of all. . . .*

he sang quietly and then suddenly stopped: someone was walking across the square in his direction. He could hear slow, dragging steps on the asphalt.

"Is that you, Andrei?" The voice was low. "Where've you been all this time? I waited and waited. . . ."

"I was putting out the paper. Here's a copy for you."

"Ah," said Nikolai, breathing heavily. "Let me see. . . ."

He grasped Andrei's arm and walked beside him. Nikolai's arm was heavy, the arm of a very tired man; Andrei looked in alarm at his face—in the darkness it looked drawn, the eyes sunken, the edges of his mouth drooping.

"Aren't you feeling well, Nikolai? What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter" muttered Nikolai and, lurching suddenly, almost fell on Andrei. "Nothing special, that is. . . ."

Andrei steadied his companion. He caught a strong whiff of vodka.

"Hello, hello," he said, his hand tightening on Nikolai's elbow. "Are you tight?"

"I am. What's that got to do with you?"

The tone was challenging. Nikolai straightened his shoulders and made an effort to walk in step with Andrei. But again he staggered and clung to Andrei's arm.

"I can't understand why I feel like this," he babbled. "I drank much less than Yasha. . . . You despise me, I know. All right, I don't care." His breathing was heavy, he put all his weight on Andrei's arm. "I came for you. For you, understand? The boys are waiting for me. I promised to bring you."

Another star streaked across the sky; from the roadside pines came a warm scent of resin; there were lights in the windows; the whole world was beautiful—but Andrei felt dismayed.

He led Nikolai on in silence, paying no attention to his drunken drivel, ignoring his questions.

"Are you coming?" Nikolai asked him. "You ought to, you know. They're expecting us. They'll be offended. Me, too. . . ."

He tried to turn aside but Andrei led him firmly back towards the Stalingrad. As they passed the corner of the building, Andrei dropped the letter to his father in the letter-box.

"Writing letters, eh?" said Nikolai with a laugh. "I've no time for letters. . . . We on the production side have to work, you know. You look down on fellows who work in the shop, don't you? You refuse to drink with us."

"Yes, I do refuse to drink—with you," said Andrei sharply.

He dragged the reeling Nikolai up the stairs from landing to landing. Neither of them spoke as they went up, but once in their room, Andrei grasped Nikolai by the shoulders and shook him hard.

"What d'you think my father would say to this? He's a production worker, too, by the way. D'you think he'd commend you for being in this filthy state? Tight, befuddled, can't even stand on your own legs. Who've you been drinking with? What did you have to do it for?"

"I've been drinking with my turners." The strong light made Nikolai frown. "Good fellows. . . . Had to treat them, you know. It's a tradition. . . . a workers' tradition, you see. The foreman's supposed to treat his men."

His legs gave way and he flopped on to the edge of his bed. He felt sick, his boyish face was pale, his hair stuck clammily to his forehead, his shirt collar was undone, revealing a thin youthful neck.

He kept up his blustering; his tongue ran on trying to find excuses for his conduct.

"There's a turner called Yasha in my section, you see. He's a splendid fellow, really splendid but he has family troubles. He told me I ought to push the boat out. He insisted, you understand? We asked the Comsomol organizer, too. At first he didn't want to come, but in the end he came. It's the one who plays the trombone, d'you remember? He's also got family trouble. . . . We had a drink and a fine talk. I wanted you to be there so I came for you. Why are you so angry about that?"

"Tradition!" Andrei said derisively. "That's a rotten tradition, the tradition of pub-crawlers and boozers. Oh, Nik, Nik. You're making a pretty poor start on your independent life."

Nikolai listened but his eyelids drooped and he made several moves to lie down. There was a guilty smile on his lips. At length he rocked once more, stretched his legs and lay down on the white counterpane.

"Now that's really swinish," Andrei jerked him to his feet. "You go and take a shower and don't forget your soap and towel."

Nikolai picked up his towel obediently and followed Andrei to the bathroom. Sasha, the warden, handed them the key but warned them that there was no hot water.

"All to the good," said Andrei. "The colder the better."

Turning on the tap till the shower stung his hands, he pushed Nikolai under its jets. Nikolai started back but Andrei held him under the cruel, ruthless stream. He stood beside Nikolai shouting when the water whipped his back with its icy lashes.

"Doesn't it feel good?" he cried, shoving Nikolai right under the shower. "Come on, a bit longer. Let it wash the booze out of you. Keep your head up. It's the only cure for you."

As he rubbed himself down with a towel, Andrei took a hard look at Nikolai. He saw his expression turn from injury to anger; he saw him draw himself up, and start slapping himself all over his pink body; he saw a gleam return to his eyes and a smile to his lips.

"Coming round, eh?" he asked when Nikolai shook himself and ran from under the shower. "Just look at him. Now he looks like a human being again and not like a blue corpse pulled out of a river. Feel hungry? I do."

"I could eat something," said Nikolai.

He dressed, watching Andrei who by then was combing his dark curly hair in front of a mirror. How neat and straight the parting ran from his temple, how well-cut and smooth the hair was at the back of the neck. His own hair was almost long enough to wear in plaits. Nikolai touched his nape. Why was it that Andrei never forgot to have his hair cut?

They had some supper at a small table, which they pulled up to the open window. Below them the whole settlement slept in darkness. There was not a sound except from far away a sad melody sung in a high lingering voice to the strains of an accordion.

"Feel like sleep?" asked Andrei. "I don't. Now tell me how it all happened and what those tragedies of yours are."

(to be concluded)

Translated by R. P.

Illustrations by V. Bogatkin



LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

VICTOR PERTSOV

MAYAKOVSKY AND HIS POEM "VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN"

ONE of Mayakovsky's greatest poems is *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*. That poem marked the beginning of a new period, the most fruitful both ideologically and artistically, in his work. At the same time it was the consummation of all that was best in the preceding period.

Mayakovsky began to write this poem soon after Lenin's death and worked on it for more than half a year (approximately from March to September 1924). The deep sorrow pervading the introductory and concluding parts is only natural. The loss of their leader was a shock to the entire people and Mayakovsky shared their anguished grief. Yet that feeling, expressed with the utmost sincerity, did not cause the poet to forget that his chief purpose in writing the poem was to arouse the masses to a keener sense of responsibility for the cause to which Lenin dedicated his life.

For his first reaction to Lenin's death, the poem *Komsomolskaya*, in which he found an approach to the theme he later treated in *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Mayakovsky chose as an epigraph the words "Death—don't dare." *Komsomolskaya* was a spirited, cheering poem addressed to the youth, a poem with the profoundly optimistic burden:

Lenin—lived,

Lenin—lives.

Lenin—ever will live.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin opens and closes with depictions of the nation's grief, but this "ring" encloses "the story of Lenin," and it is that story that forms the essential part of the poem. This structure was highly logical for a contemporary of Lenin who now had, together with the whole nation, to carry on Lenin's work with redoubled energy.

It was the poet's hard task to awaken the reader from the stunned condition into which his grief had led him to a realization of the fact that Lenin "is now the most live of all living," to inspire each man with the determination to follow Lenin's behests. The Party lived on and into it flowed new reinforcements of hundreds of thousands "straight from the bench—for Lenin the Party's very first wreath."

Mayakovsky's portrait of Lenin is a portrait drawn by a contemporary poet, not an historian. Facts and minutiae of Lenin's life, great ideas

expressive of the essence of his historic achievement, came flowing to the poet from everywhere, taking possession of his creative consciousness which was already attuned to the task he had set himself. He drew the "material" for his poem from life itself, from the people's feeling for Lenin, a feeling unanimously manifested everywhere. It pulsed as strong in a conversation accidentally overheard in the street as from the rostrum of the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets, which opened on January 26, 1924, with a meeting in memory of Lenin.

Day in and day out, month after month the newspapers and magazines of 1924 carried stories and reminiscences of Lenin by his contemporaries and comrades-in-arms, his unpublished articles, his letters to Gorky, biographical information about him. All these facts and details fed the poet's imagination. With all the people he absorbed them as they were first made public and interwoven into the "fabric" of the times in which he lived.

When he started on his poem, Mayakovsky realized very well that Lenin was a hero the like of whom had never before been seen in all the history of mankind. Employing the only yardsticks they knew, bourgeois newspapers compared him to Cromwell, Robespierre and Napoleon, comparisons that testified to the involuntary respect in which even enemies held the great leader of the proletarian revolution, but that were, of course, utterly incapable of bringing them any nearer to a real understanding of him.

For a proletarian poet the figure of Lenin as a new epic hero was inextricably bound up with the image of the millions who rose to conscious participation in the October Revolution, an event unparalleled in the history of the world. Just as the highest watermark in a flood is indicative of the entire body of water, so in Lenin's person the revolutionary masses recognized their own possibilities.

"I felt very nervous about this poem, as it would have been easy to reduce it to a pamphlet in verse," Mayakovsky wrote in his autobiography (Chapter "1924"). His anxiety evidently persisted until the stirring moment when, as he wrote, "the workers' attitude to it gladdened me and confirmed my conviction that the poem was needed."

To educe the quintessence of so recent an event, the poet had to mobilize all his faculties, to create a distance between himself and the event, "at least a mental distance, if not one of time and place," to forestall the future "in order to haul along a stretch of time comprehended."

Although there are long passages from the poem in them, Mayakovsky's two notebooks for 1924 contain no notes or references to what is customarily called a "plan." This, of course, does not mean that he did not "plot" the structure of his poem as a whole, that he gave no forethought to the construction of his significant and complex theme. Mayakovsky did not "write out" a plan, but then, neither did he write out his first rough version of his verses. It was only the last stage of his work, only the versions close to the final text, that went into his notebook.

But the poem itself in its published form offers ample evidence, to anyone who takes the trouble to consider it, of the logic of the author's presentation of the subject, of his adherence to a definite plan.

What exactly did the poet mean when he said that he "felt very nervous about this poem, as it would have been easy to reduce it to a pamphlet in verse"? The question has a direct bearing on his plan for developing his theme, as formulated in the introduction of the poem.

Lenin
is now
the most live of all living,
Our weapon,
our knowledge,
our power.

The emotional core of the beginning of "the story of Lenin" and of the third and concluding part depicting Lenin's funeral, is one and the same—the grief of the entire people. Mayakovsky's pictures of that grief are painted with such artistic power, with such depth of feeling that it gives the reader the sensation of himself being an eyewitness and participant. Naturally, it is not to these scenes and these feelings that his fear of reducing his poem to a "pamphlet in verse" refers. But though these scenes conveying the people's feeling for Lenin bring his inexpressibly dear image to life, they alone cannot convey the whole of what Lenin was and meant. Some of the aspects of the people's grief in the opening section, forestalling the complete picture given in the final section, are illuminated by the poet's very terse but vivid characterization of the departed leader as the most human of all men:

We
bury
now
the most earthly
of all
who have lived
on this earth of men.

For all its forcefulness, this characterization would have been too general if the poet had not asked "Where's he from? Who is he? What's he done? This most human of all men?" Replying to these questions, the poet presents Lenin against the background of the history of the Revolution (in the first and second parts of the poem). This arrangement was fully justified by the logic of his theme. Only in that way could he help the reader to a better understanding of his grief, which in many cases was unconscious and spontaneous, could he help him to analyse his own emotions and thus transmute his sorrow into strength. And it was this central and longest section of the poem that Mayakovsky was worried about.

The story of Lenin's work presented against the background of the history of the Revolution had necessarily to be based on facts from the history of the Party and from Lenin's biography. During the days of mourning, a short biography of V. I. Lenin was distributed in the streets of Moscow. To avoid merely rehashing facts that were already sufficiently well known, the poet had to condense them into an artistic generalization, into a picture of the movement of history, with the people, the Party and Lenin as its participants.

Any long narrative consists of separate parts which lead up to the ideological and emotional climax. In this poem the answer to the question

"what's he done?" is composed of a "portrait of capitalism" up to the time of Lenin's birth, and the story of Lenin's revolutionary activities up to his illness ("Ilyich has had a stroke"), which makes up the second part of the poem. The "portrait of capitalism" is the necessary introduction without which the greatness of Lenin, the logic of his appearance on the scene cannot be properly appreciated. With Lenin's appearance in this second part, the emotional temper of the narrative mounts steadily.

The "portrait of capitalism" is a historical digression in a poem about modern times. The poet warns his readers that this is a "family portrait" painted for "grandsons" who never saw or came into contact with the "original."

The recurring alternation of the historical and contemporary planes sustains the emotional intensity of the narrative, keeps the reader from submerging himself in history, even if heroic history, from forgetting the tasks of the present, integrating the story of the past with the struggles of today and tomorrow.

The famous lyrical digression about the Party and its triumph in the October Revolution is lifted out of its chronological place and set before the scenes of the 1905 Revolution. In this digression the reader finds the philosophic message of the poem presented in its most concentrated form. The poet greeted the October Revolution as "his" and now he claims the Party as his, too. "My Party," he says and it is "my" for every working man, "my" because the fate, the happiness and the future of each one individual of the millions are bound up with and embodied in it. And in this awareness of the bond between the masses and the Party lie the roots of the Party's strength.

*Brains of the class,
cause of the class,
strength of the class,
glory of the class*

the poet says of the Party and finds splendid, simple words, words that have become famous, to explain its "meaning":

*The Party and Lenin
are brothers born--
Which is dearer
to Mother History's heart?
We say Lenin,
meaning—
the Party,
We say
Party,
meaning—
Lenin.*

And then again there comes a shuffling of the past and present. The author describes the events of January 9, 1905 as though he had been a participant: "We fall, cut down by the tsar's lead," including himself among the victims of the "tsar's mercy."

Mayakovsky had need of all his experience as an agitator and all his skill as a poet who speaks to the masses to show in a succession of stanzas

as rapid as the succession of pictures on a screen how "terrible 1914 rises from the years," and bring the reader to the day when "we spat out their dynasty like a cigarette butt." That last image is astounding for its poetic economy, for the poet's ability to compress and generalize in a line or two a whole historical period—in this case the early days of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February.

His depiction of these events—the background against which he painted the figure of Lenin—was facilitated by the fact that they were still fresh in his memory. Besides, their more exact details were constantly being recalled to his mind by the commemoration in 1924 of such memorable dates as the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of the world war and the seventh anniversary of Lenin's return to Russia, or by political events such as the trial of the Socialist-Revolutionary terrorist Boris Savinkov.

The narration of all these events is followed by a second lyrical digression. As in his hymn to the Party the author anticipated the course of history to reveal the social essence of his hero's strength, so in his second digression his manoeuvre of anticipating time and imagining Communism accomplished allows him to measure the magnitude of Lenin's historic achievement:

And when
from those days
we look back at these,
Lenin's head
we shall first
recall;—
From
the milleniums
spent on their knees
Men made the ascent
towards Freedom
for all. . . .

This lyrical digression creates the distance necessary for generalization. The greater the hero or the event, the greater the distance one must retire to to grasp them properly. From their function in his poem, it would be more correct to call these lyrical digressions lyrical anticipations, because they help to establish the distance required for an epic, "a mental distance, if not one of time and place." The reality of the future, or, as Gorky put it, the "third reality," is always palpable in Mayakovsky's narrative about the present.

There is no dividing epical from lyrical and lyrical from epical in this poem, because lyricism is here not a genre but a means of picturing the present as the past, of glancing at it from the vantage point of the future, of taking a look at oneself from the future.

It is worthwhile examining some of the innovations to be found in the poem, not in order to lay down the law, to set up any one way of composing a Socialist epic as the sole way, but merely in order to clarify the specific features of the epic form Mayakovsky's "story of Lenin" took.

Elements that were merely hinted at or faintly indicated in Mayakovsky's earlier work and might have seemed paradoxical now became con-

crete. In quite a few passages of this poem Mayakovsky's "I" has a dual meaning. It is the "I" of the poet and the "I" of any citizen, and in the final analysis the two merge. Kalinin once said that Lenin was the ideal particle in the heart of every man. It is precisely of such moral purity, of such fidelity to one's principles that Mayakovsky speaks in his introduction, where he first introduces the poet's "I."

*I
clean myself
by Lenin,
to cruise
still further
in Revolution's sea.*

It was "by Lenin" that the Party cleaned its ranks at that time, and this historical fact illumines the social content of Mayakovsky's lines. But it was not individual self-perfection that interested him. What he urged was the re-education, the remaking of self in the collective. And in this the poet's "I" merged with the "I" of any citizen. "The story of Lenin" is as much a story about himself, except that the plane on which it is told is not only lyrical.

In his poem Mayakovsky is himself a hero of history, inasmuch as he is a "particle" of the collective hero. And as such he speaks in the first person. He is the inconspicuous little man who follows Lenin and is ennobled, made wiser and purer by him. In other words, he is a lyrical and an epic hero at one and the same time.

"It's time I begin the story of Lenin," Mayakovsky declares at the beginning of his poem, and begins the story of himself. This is an interesting feature of the epic of the proletarian revolution, whose heroes are the people, the Party and Lenin—three "brothers born." Typified in it is one other epic hero—he whom we have called a "particle," that is, Mayakovsky the poet, as well as any citizen, or rather, the citizen in general. The word "particle," uttered by Kalinin a day or two after Lenin's death, was instantly accepted and made part and parcel of life. And it was this hero—a "particle" of Lenin's collective, a subject of history—that Mayakovsky portrayed as an epic hero whose form of expression is lyrical:

*I'm happy
that I'm
a small part of that power. . . .*

With Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Mayakovsky achieved a higher degree of maturity. The accidental and alien elements that obscured his artistic individuality dropped away from him, while the original elements characteristic of him were manifested in the fullness of their charm and power. His individual style sloughed off what he himself called "poetic husks" and became more polished. His sense of the historical significance of events was crystallized in his interpretation of Lenin and came to be the key to his understanding of his own writing.

In 1923 and 1924 the Russian literary language began to attract attention as a political as well as a literary problem. Development of the workers' correspondents movement disclosed the gulf between the language employed by professional men of letters and that spoken by the working

people of town and country, from among whom the workers' correspondents sprang. It was felt then that there was need to "revivify the stale language of our newspapers."

While studying Lenin and gaining a deeper understanding of his place in history, the poet also came to understand the place his own work occupied in the historical development of Russian poetry. The historical approach is a characteristic feature of realism, especially Socialist realism. Formerly Mayakovsky had thought of the cultural revolution as a sudden jump without a running start. The work he put into his poem about Lenin changed his way of thinking. Turning the poem over in his mind, rereading Lenin's works, familiar to him from his youth, and other favourite works, as Marx's Preface to *Critique of Political Economy* and the *Communist Manifesto*, Mayakovsky came to see Lenin as a figure arisen out of the struggle of revolutionary generations and representing their continuity. Not rejection of the past, but gradual accumulation of the elements of the new in the historical process, culminating in the appearance of a new quality—that is what he now perceived in the theme of Lenin. To put this into poetry was a task that engrossed him. Lenin joined up the stream of the working-class movement with the mighty revolutionary stream that took its source in the depths of Russian history, flowing towards the present from the 18th century. And so Mayakovsky said in his poem:

*A long time ago,
 about two hundred years,
for the very first time
 news of Lenin appears.*

But was not this just as true of cultural developments? Lenin, indeed, always emphasized the necessity of assimilating the cultural heritage and ridiculed the arrogant ignorance of the "Proletkult" enthusiasts.

But, to give the fullest expression to the revolutionary content of his poems, Mayakovsky had to create his own artistic form, to find new artistic means and multiply the rhythmic wealth of Russian poetry.

At the same time, while working to bring the language of poetry closer to the language of the people, Mayakovsky fought the bourgeois decadent poets who even back in the 'twenties already sought to impose their own aesthetic "standards" upon the young Soviet poetry, restricting its right to draw words from life itself and essaying to "forbid" the use of political terms in poetry.

Belinsky admired Pushkin, the great "poet of reality" for his genius in investing the most prosaic subjects with poetry. This same gift distinguished Mayakovsky as the poet of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Considering the prospects indicated by Pushkin of entrenching the colloquial language and real vocabulary of the people in poetry, surely it was natural for Mayakovsky, at this new historical stage, to adopt the "strange vernacular, at first despised" that was the "language of the millions," whom the "Revolution flung out into the streets."

In full conformity with the tendency to affirm realism and folk elements in the language of poetry, Mayakovsky freely employed political terms in his poem about Lenin. Merely to list all those political and journalistic terms would, however, serve no good purpose. The important

point is that he took such words as "party," "proletariat," "class," words denoting the new elements in life, the political foundation of the Revolution, and made them the most poetic, using them in a manner to center the emotional impact of a thought or feeling in them. They were no longer simply words; they were hero-words which the poet presented to the reader, for which he fought as for the beautiful in life:

"Proletariat"'s
so crude and unsightly
to those
for whom Communism's
a deadly blight.
For us
that one word
is music so mighty,
that even
the dead
it can raise to fight!

Like a composer to whom a sound suggested an idea or an image, the poet weighs the rhythmic and phonetic value of a hero-word in its poetic context. When he borrowed an "inelegant word" from the political vocabulary, Mayakovsky did more than merely make use of it; through the specific medium of verse he made it sound like "mighty music."

Important components of the vocabulary of the poem are neologisms, and these also perform the same function of affirming realism and folk elements in the language of poetry, that is, the tendency started by Pushkin and continued in the new historical epoch by Mayakovsky.

Mayakovsky dedicated his poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* to the Communist Party. The grief felt by the Party and the people was shared by Mayakovsky. That grief could find relief only in action. In his case it was assuaged by the great new happiness of knowing that he did not stand alone. The grief of the working class resolved itself in an unexampled upsurge of labour energy and a sense of close kinship with the Party. The "Lenin Enrolment" brought the Party thousands of new members from among the ranks of the working class, and to Soviet poetry it brought Mayakovsky's poem about Lenin.

On October 24, 1924, that is, two days after reading his poem to members of the Moscow Party organization, the poet left for Paris where he hoped to receive an entrance visa to America.

After Mayakovsky's death there was found among his papers a copy of *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, closely typewritten as a prose text and without a title. This copy he had taken abroad with him, for the theme of Lenin was for the whole world. To it no one could be indifferent, there could be only friends and enemies. With this poem Mayakovsky could appear before and be understood by the working people of any capital, and in the farthest corners of the world.

AZERBAIJANIAN HISTORICAL NOVEL

IT IS characteristic that in each of the national literatures of the Soviet Union we find attempts being made to trace the development of its people as conscious makers of history.

The history of the revolutionary struggle in Transcaucasia offers invaluable material to any writer interested in the subject. Under the specific conditions that obtained there, with class and national interests closely interwoven, a militant working-class organization began to be formed in Transcaucasia at the very dawn of the labour movement in Russia. It gave the revolutionary movement such eminent figures as J. V. Stalin, the great continuator of Lenin's work, and as Sergo Orjonikidze, S. Shaumyan, A. Dzghaparidze, M. Azizbekov and I. Fioletov.

That the rich revolutionary history of Transcaucasia should have attracted the attention of Azerbaijanian writers is only natural; it furnished the material for the appearance of historical novels in Azerbaijanian literature.

It is worth while to mention two of the works of this genre.

The activity of the illegal Bolshevik organization in Baku in the early part of the century is the subject of Mekhti Hussein's novel *Morning*, whose chief characters are two representatives of the Azerbaijan people, the professional revolutionary Meshadi Azizbekov and the worker Bairam.

While Hussein portrays only a few characters who have direct contact with the leaders of the revolution, Suleiman Raghimov seeks in his novel *Shamo* (two volumes of it have appeared) to depict the everyday life of the masses.

The plot of Raghimov's book is built around a commonplace episode in the life of a poor family in the remote mountain village of Shekhli. That episode points the ideological message of the novel, for it and the circumstances attending it are typical of the social and economic situation that by virtue of historical necessity leads to a revolutionary eruption.

Old Safar and his family are oppressed beyond human endurance. The small scrap of land they own barely suffices to keep them on the thin edge of starvation. Shamo, Safar's eldest son and his pride and joy, is obliged to leave his native village and hire himself out as a shepherd to Prince Gherai-bek. Later he goes to work at a cotton-ginning mill. He is young and strong and not afraid of hard work, but even so can do no more than support himself. The only gift he can bring home with him when he returns to Shekhli—a gift indeed priceless—is his revolutionary spirit, nurtured by his hard life and given direction by the wisdom of the Baku Bolshevik organization. Safar's daughter, the beautiful Gyulsenem, is engaged to marry quiet Gazi, the son of old Alo, Safar's

neighbour and sworn brother, but she is abducted by the son of rich Gatamkhan. With her new family she leads a miserable life. Her light-minded husband treats her as a slave and is false to her; her niggardly, bad-tempered mother-in-law uses her as a handmaiden. So maltreated is she that she dare not caress her own son. When the child is a little older, the corrupt mullah who blessed her forced marriage hastily dissolves it. The young woman is disgraced forever. In accordance with tradition, she is driven from the house only half clad, despite the wintry weather.

Gyulsenem's younger brother, scrawny little Gyulmamed, grows up in such dire want that even a gruel of forest roots, provided it is seasoned with the tiniest pinch of precious salt, seems a rare delicacy to him.

Few people in the village of Shekhli live any better. Gamer, the girl Shamo loves, has lived all her days in a sooty clay hut. Good-natured Alo spends his unusual strength in thankless hard work that leaves him as poor as ever. But neither want nor privation can make him forget the shame that has come to his family with the abduction of his son's bride. And towering above all this grief and poverty like an impregnable fortress enclosed by a high wall, stands the house of rich Gatamkhan to whom all the district round is in debt.

This mountain village is like a small world to itself, yet inseparable social and economic bonds connect it with the larger world that is already beginning to show signs of unrest before the imminent revolutionary storm. Gusts of the revolutionary wind have already reached the high mountain pasture where young Shamo and his friend and kinsman, vivacious Farzali, tend the Prince's sheep. The impoverished shepherds are already growing conscious of their unity, and not only in their brave dances and games, or in their courageous battles with the elements, but also in the stubborn resistance they are prepared to offer to Gherai-bek's steward, Gamdulla, who only yesterday was still all-powerful.

While showing the extreme poverty of the people and how cruelly they are oppressed, Raghimov is far from picturing his characters as pitiful and humble. Lamentable as is Gyulsenem's position, even when she is being most cruelly humiliated, she preserves her dignity. In the moments of her heaviest afflictions she begins to wonder whether she does right to bear blows and insults in silence, to bow her head before those who abuse her. Nor do the older people — Safar, and especially Alo — bow their heads. In their minds the traditional conception of honour which bade one avenge insults to one's family begin to take the form of indignation against the rich who mistreat them, and this indignation grows into open protest. When the Mussavatists torture Safar to find out where his Bolshevik son is, Alo comes to his rescue with a group of their fellow-villagers. Ideas of blood vengeance may still occur to the older men, but Alo's son Gazi already rejects this custom as "old rubbish." In his search for a way to achieve a life worthy of human beings, he inclines to side with Shamo who is connected with the Bolsheviks and who plainly says: "We have to arouse the people to action, not for petty vengeance, but for something big and of benefit to the whole people." The strength of the people is forcefully revealed in the vivid scenes of shepherd life at the foot of the mighty Deli-Dagh, scenes reminiscent of epic tales. Fighting games and dances that rock the earth, sincerity in love, in friendship and in enmity—all these are indicative of the vigour and spontaneity of the people's feel-

ings. It is no wonder that the shepherd dance is accompanied by the beating of a drum while the *zurna* sings the song of Ker-ogly, a just and valourous legendary hero, who struck terror into the hearts of the khans and pashas. No wonder the shepherds in their disputes with Garndulla cite the name of Gichakha Nabi, another legendary hero who was the terror of the landlords and tsarist officials. The idea of just popular retribution was alive among the masses. It was the dry powder that a spark from the flaming words of the revolutionaries would set alight. And the first to follow those revolutionaries in the novel is young Shamo, whom the shepherds call "the descendant of Ker-ogly," and who gives embodiment to the finest traits of the Azerbaijan people.

Heroes are not born; they are created by the people. This idea is clearly brought out in the book through the flesh-and-blood characters of ordinary people who not only like and know how to work but also know how to uphold their dignity together. Among them are young Shamo and his old father Safar, Alo, the wise, sharp-tongued old peasant Baba-kishi, and the participants in the working-class movement: the Baku worker Gummet, the young oil worker Eibat, the old nomad Kamran, in whose camp, amidst the ruins of an ancient castle perched on an inaccessible cliff, the rebels establish their headquarters and store their arms.

The details of the people's life are depicted in Raghimov's novel in a natural and lively manner. The author shows the inevitability of a social upheaval and discloses the forces that are later set into motion by the revolution. We see how a class instinct awakens in the depths of the popular masses of Transcaucasia, how among people advanced to leadership by the masses that instinct grows into class consciousness and arms them for the decisive combat against their "own" and foreign oppressors, against nationalists and interventionists, for the establishment of Soviet power.

In the first volume we already see the forces that organize the spontaneous, growing dissatisfaction of the popular masses, that head them and weld them into an irresistible power.

The author does not concentrate all his attention upon that remarkable revolutionary Meshadi Azizbekov alone, although he might well have been tempted to do so (as in some measure Mekhti Hussein was tempted in his novel *Morning*). The rank-and-file members of the underground organization—Gummet, Eibat, the teacher Mirza-Polad, the Russian foreman at the ginnery, Matvei Prokhorov—are all live and convincing characters. These are the men who have contact with the Baku Party organization and carry out its assignments. Shamo receives his revolutionary schooling at the ginnery, and it is there that he develops into the future leader of the poor peasants of his native village and an opponent of the nationalists. In this way a strong bond is forged between the Baku underground and the smoky hut of old Safar in the remote mountain village of Shekhli.

Its many character portraits of ordinary people, showing the deep ties between the Party and the people and graphically demonstrating the great meaning and aim of their struggle, gives Raghimov's *Shamo* an important advantage over Hussein's *Morning*. The latter treats of the activities of professional revolutionaries, while the people as such seem to exist somewhere beyond its boundaries.

Raghimov does best, it must be said, with his village characters: the poor peasants, the farm hands and shepherds on the one hand, and the kulaks, village police, scribe and mullah on the other. The author seems to be aware of this and makes no effort to describe the life of the workers in any great detail. This cannot but be regretted, for his book is really a story of the life of the people.

As regards the depiction of how the capitalist mode of production furthers the growth of the revolutionary consciousness of the working class, it is Mekhti Hussein who has the advantage. The conditions of labour at privately owned enterprises which impel the workers to protest, emphasize the necessity of class solidarity and the consolidation of progressive forces, are shown clearly enough in *Morning*. The working-class masses are not represented there by so many individual characters as is the peasantry in *Shamo*, but then, Hussein's literary method is different from Raghimov's. Whereas the latter paints a broad canvas of popular life in all the colourful reality of everyday details, Hussein constructs a tense, closely-knit plot, borrowing from the multivariied colours of everyday life only the few he needs for his story. Raghimov portrays a whole series of characters; Hussein builds up one collective type, leaving minor characteristics out of his portrait.

Some unimportant shortcomings notwithstanding, these Azerbaijanian historical novels correctly depict the people as the makers of history.

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

KHWAJA AHMAD ABBAS

NOTES ON INDIAN LITERATURES

TO TRY to communicate in a single article even the most elementary information about the wide range of Indian literatures is difficult, if not impossible.

Consider the peculiar nature of the literary situation in India. We have more than a dozen major languages—Hindustani in its two forms (Hindi and Urdu), Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kanarese, Panjabi, Assamese, Oriya, Sindhi, Kashmiri—each with its own literature and cultural traditions which, in some cases, may be several hundred or even several thousand years old. During the nearly two centuries of imperialist rule, the English language was almost the only means of communication between the peoples speaking, or writing in, these different languages. Only since 1947 when India achieved political independence has Hindi, the language of North India, been officially recognized as the state language and is slowly taking the place of English as the medium of inter-provincial cultural and literary exchange.

The diversity of languages is not the only difficulty in presenting a brief assessment of Indian literature—or, rather, Indian literatures. There is diversity of ideological content, too. Due to the fact that class conflicts in Indian society have not yet been resolved, the Indian literatures contain writings on different ideological planes—covering the whole range from reactionary escapism to Socialist realism. Likewise the form, in poetry as well as in prose, is also diversified—ranging from classical purity and rigidity to modernistic experimentations in portage and in free, rhymeless verse.

In this article, therefore, I will try only to provide a few brief notes on Indian literatures which may serve as an introduction to the literary world of India, with a comparatively more detailed account of the recent literary developments in Hindustani, the language in which I write and, therefore, with which I am most familiar.

If diversity is the key-note of Indian literature (as it is of Indian life in general), we also find a certain underlying unity of purpose and common experience.

For one thing, most of the Indian languages have a common origin.

That creates between them a certain traditional affinity. The impact of Arabic and Persian literatures which came with the Muslim invaders (who later settled down permanently in India and got more or less merged in the local population) has been another common factor between the different Indian languages. Many Arabic and Persian literary legends are part of the Indian literatures, and thousands of Arabic and Persian words are to be found not only in Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi (which, being North Indian languages, were directly influenced by the Muslim influx), but also in Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi—even in Tamil and Malayalam, the languages of the extreme South.

The greatest bond between the Indian literatures, however, has been the common experience of imperialist rule which not only shaped the political unity of the people of different provinces of India but also greatly influenced the development of common—or similar—cultural and literary traditions.

All true literature must reflect not only the life but also the collective urges and aspirations of the people. Without an exception the literature in every language of India has fulfilled this historic task. But since its content has mirrored social reality, naturally the literature could not develop very much faster than the social environment. If even today, the literatures in Indian languages suffer from the hang-over of feudalism (manifested in mysticism, escapism, and a decadent approach to love and life), it is because the Indian society itself is not yet completely free from the hang-over of feudalism. Socialist literature can only be produced in a Socialist country; in a country where the people have still to travel the road from political freedom to a more equitable and socialistic economic order, the literature is bound to be in a state of tension and transition—between two worlds, one dying, the other in the process of birth! But this struggle between the old and new forces in society lends an exciting, fighting quality to literature much of which has to be literature of protest, even as much of our progressive journalism has to be of the muck-raking variety, to expose the rotteness and corruption of the old order.

Within these limitations, let it be said that Indian literatures have duly kept pace with the growing aspirations of the people. Indeed, one can get a clear picture of the development of our national life by a chronological study of any of our literatures. If the first wave of anti-imperialist patriotic sentiment was accompanied by the all-round renaissance of Indian culture, the sense of pride in our past, as represented at its best by the great Tagore, then the Gandhi era in the growing anti-imperialist struggle was reflected in the creation of a powerful nationalist literature in all the major languages. This literature was not only anti-imperialist in its inspiration but it also had a progressive social content—the hatred of the foreign aggressor was logically leading us to a critical self-examination of the feudal structure of our own society. The movement for political freedom was accompanied by a movement for social change—reformist in its character, no doubt, and certainly *not revolutionary*, but in historical context progressive and full of genuine sympathy for the underdogs of society—specially for the “untouchables” who were being crushed by the caste system and for the women who had once held a high and honoured place in ancient Indian society but were later subjected to many disabilities and taboos by the social reactionaries. This era of patriotic-reformist literature was represented, among others, by Sarat Chandra Chat-

terji—a Bengali writer with an acute insight into human character and with genuine compassion for the poor and the dispossessed, comparable to Dickens; Bharati, a Tamil poet of caste-ridden South India, who had the vision and the courage to defy the rules of caste and to sing of the new, free, casteless Indian; and Munshi Prem Chand in the North, the author of many fine and progressive novels about the peasants, who may justly be compared with Leo Tolstoy, for he possessed the same mellow humanism and, in another sense, with Lu Hsun of China—for he had the same depth of perception and the same love for the people. Again, like Lu Hsun in China, Prem Chand bridged the gap between the old and the new writers—he belonged to both generations, but finally came over to the camp of progressives.

Thus when the Communist, Socialist and Trade-Union movements brought with them the Marxist inspiration and the Marxist outlook for Indian literatures, it was Munshi Prem Chand who was elected first President of the Indian Progressive Writers Association. Since then, the Progressives—including Communists and non-Party Marxists—have dominated the new literature in many Indian languages. This was but natural, for they alone could analyse and portray the changing social conditions in their writings, and they alone have been making a conscious effort to come closer to the people.

Some of them whose works have achieved international renown are Mulk Raj Anand, whose stories have already appeared in Russian and whose novels like *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, etc. have been translated into a dozen languages of the world and have recently appeared in the People's Democracies; and Bhabani Bhattacharya, whose powerful novel of the Bengal famine, *So Many Hungers*, has been translated into Russian and several other Eastern European languages.

It is interesting to find, however, that with a few notable exceptions like those mentioned above, the progressive fiction-writers of Indian languages have turned out very few novels, but a large number of short stories. There is an economic explanation for this phenomenon—the average progressive writer in India is poor, over-worked, and has very few leisure hours to devote to writing. A serious novel requires many months of concentrated writing, and he can seldom afford to have that much time off from his work—which, in most cases, means not only professional work to earn a living as a teacher, a journalist or a clerk, but also political and agitational work in one or more of the progressive organizations or movements. So often it happens that the best he can manage is a Sunday or a holiday when he can sit down quietly and write—a short story! Hence the great progress we have recorded in the field of short-story writing, and the comparatively poor output of good Indian novels.

What is the line of development in Indian literatures since 1947 when India achieved political independence?

It should be recalled that the reactionary illusion of "Art for Art's Sake" had been abandoned by almost all the significant writers during the freedom struggle in which the Indian writers took an active part not merely through their anti-imperialist and socially progressive writings but also through direct participation in the political life of the country. Hundreds of Indian writers were imprisoned by the British for "seditious" writings or for defiance of the British laws. Their books were banned and burned; for instance the first collection of stories of Prem Chand was burnt

on public squares by the imperialist enslavers of our people. A Hindustani poet Bismil was sentenced to death for revolutionary terrorism, and mounted the gallows with his famous lyric of freedom on his lips. The few poets of the ivory tower, who continued to swear by "Art for Art's Sake" and "pure lyricism untouched by politics" lost their illusions during the grim Bengal famine when British policies yielded a "harvest of horrors" and four million people died of starvation. The transformation of Jigar, the Urdu lyrical poet, who was once the most prominent formalist and an upholder of the "Art for Art's Sake" theory, into a socially-conscious progressive, was the direct result of the Bengal famine which provoked him to write, for the first time, a lyric with a clear anti-imperialist motif. This socially conscious *ghazal* or lyric of Jigar marks the final capitulation of the formalists.

The imperialist-engineered partition of the country and its consequence, the grim tragedy of Hindu-Muslim riots and mass migrations of huge populations, provided the Indian writers the first test of their integrity in the post-freedom era. And they came out of it with their humanism unsullied by the current fanatical passions. In the midst of an atmosphere of hate and hysteria, writers like Krishan Chandar, Ismat Chughtai, Rajender Singh Bedi not only upheld the rational and humanistic values through their bold writings but also exposed the ultimate responsibility of imperialism for a tragedy that was the terrible culmination of its age-old policy of "Divide and Rule." Among the poets the Panjabi poetess Amrita Pritam deserves special mention for her memorable and hauntingly beautiful lament on the tragedy of the Panjabi written in the style of the Panjabi folk classic *heer*. The progressive writers, in close co-operation with progressive cultural organizations like the Indian People's Theatre, launched a nation-wide campaign to stop the flood-tide of fratricidal hate and to explain to the people the real origins of the trouble in the context of imperialist machinations. Short stories (which were not only printed but read out at mass meetings), plays, skits, open-air shows, mobile theatres on trucks, and processions, were all used in this campaign. The progressive writers—in whose united ranks were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—played a memorable role in restoring sanity and unity.

Since then the progressive writers continue to be the most significant and most effective factor in the literatures of Urdu, Hindi and all the other languages. The non-progressives are either lost in the ancient tangled webs of mysticism or the new-fangled literary jig-saw puzzles of futurism and existentialism, and their appeal is limited to small 'esoteric coteries.

In a country where literacy has only just reached the 25 per cent mark (at the end of the British rule in 1947 it was a little more than 11 per cent), the *Mushera* or *Kavi Sammelan* (poets' symposium) plays a very important part in the dissemination of popular literature to vast masses of people. These gatherings which are held at night and almost always in the open air are attended by thousands of people—there are cases on record where fifty thousand or even more were present to hear a galaxy of popular poets. This invests poetry in India with a special significance as people's literature, and gives to the poets popularity and power and special responsibility. It is mainly because of this direct contact with vast audiences that, almost in all Indian languages, poetry has developed more than prose and come closer to the people. The progressive poets have

retained their hold on the popular imagination by presenting their new ideology in traditional as well as new lyrical images—conforming to Stalin's definition of literature being national in form and Socialist in content.

For a time the Indian progressive poets, too, committed the mistake of ignoring the *form* and fighting shy of lyricism as something unprogressive. But this was a short-lived phase, and now (in Urdu, for instance) not only the veterans like Josh and Firaq and Jigar but also the younger poets like Ali Sardar Jafri, Jazbi, Majrooh, Wamiq and Kaifi combine meticulous attention to poetic form with their progressive thought-content.

If the ancient Indian literature belonged to the gods and kings, and the literature of the early national renaissance that accompanied the freedom movement belonged to the middle class, the new literature of the progressives is increasingly concerned with the life of the common people—the peasants and the workers, the clerks, the craftsmen, the unemployed. The advance from Prem Chand's *Gau-daan* in which the peasants only protest non-violently against the landlords, to Krishan Chandar's *When the Fields Awoke* in which a quarter century later they organize themselves on a revolutionary basis, is the story of the Indian peasantry's growing militancy; and if we consider the difference between Manik Banerji's lyrically evocative novel *Boatmen of the Padma* and *Dalit* (Document), Tulsi Lahiri's bitter and poignant play about uprooted humanity, we see the sad plight of the Bengali proletariat out of which a new revolutionary consciousness is rising.

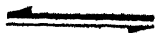
The Indian literature has gone to the people not only for its content which is the life, the struggles and the aspirations of the people, not only for national forms, e.g. for folk ballads, song-and-dance dramas, folk tales and legends but also for the creative spirit of proletarian artists. A significant and powerful novel in Bengali, *Rangrut* (The Recruit) comes from the pen of a rank-and-file soldier who fought in the last war. Anna Bhau Sathic, a worker belonging to the Harijan class that was once regarded as untouchable, has written novels, short stories, ballads and songs in Marathi about peasants and working-class life, including a novel on the anti-British uprising of 1942 when the peasants in one part of Maharashtra had set up a parallel people's government in opposition to British authority. Another proletarian literary figure in Marathi is Amar Shaikh, the poet. In Malayalam there is the peasant writer Bhasi, novelist, short-story writer and playwright, whose play *You Made Me a Communist* created a sensation with its realistic depiction of the life and struggles of the proletariat of India's southern-most state of Travancore-Cochin.

The Indian progressives in their writings have sought to reflect and represent not only the struggle of their own people, but of all other peoples. From the Great October Revolution of 1917 to the Chinese Revolution of 1949, from the Fascist invasion of Republican Spain right up to the American aggression in Korea—there is no major development in world affairs that has not *creatively* inspired the Indian writer. These are not necessarily journalistic writings or reportage, they include some of the most imaginative creative writings.

For instance, Krishan Chandar, our greatest short-story writer in Urdu, wrote *The Fig* (a story about the heroism of anti-Franco guerillas in Spain), *Queen of Hearts* and *When Seoul Was Burning* (about the inhuman atrocities committed by soldiers of American imperialism in Korea), his

world-famous *Letter to the First American Soldier Killed in Korea*, and *I Am Still Waiting* (a very moving story of an overseas Chinese girl resident in India who leaves her Indian lover to go to liberated China, promising to return, and is eventually beheaded by the American barbarians in Korea—but her Indian friend is still waiting, for he feels that her spirit is immortal and *will* return when the aggressors are driven out of Korea). Ali Sardar Jafri's book-length epic poems *Nai Duniya Ko Salam* (Salute to the New World) and *Asia Jaag Utha* (Asia Awakened), and his lyric *Sailab-e-Cheen* (Flood of New China), Raghupati Sahai Firaq's long and bitterly satirical poem, *Hum Dollar Des Ko Dekh Aye* (We Have Seen the Land of the Dollar), Kaifi's powerful poems on China and Wamiq's fine poem on Peace; Mohan Singh's Panjabi poems on the liberation of China, and stories by Navtej, Balwant Gargi's Panjabi plays *Rice Shoots* (about Korea), and *Ghoogi* (Dove) about Peace; in Hindi, Suman's famous poem *Moscow Ab Bhi Dur Hai* (Moscow Is Still Far)—a powerful declaration against Hitlerian invaders written during the war, Yashpal's reportage on the Soviet Union, Amrit Rai's reportage on New China, and Mahadevi Varma's beautiful lyrics on peace, on China; in Marathi, Anna Bhau Sathe's popular *powada* (dramatic ballad) on Stalingrad that was staged in hundreds of Maharashtrian villages; in Malayalam, the great Vallathol's poems on the Soviet Union, on New China, on Peace—these are but a few fragments from the contemporary Indian literature to show that in the crucial moment of history when the peace of the world is once again threatened, and the united will of mankind must be mobilized to defend it, the progressive Indian writers are conscious of their international obligations, and that they have learned the lesson of history that literature, while deriving its inspiration from the deep roots of national culture and depicting the life of the people it represents, must also have an international vision and an international perspective.

With the unnatural, unscientific partition of the country to suit imperialist purposes, several language areas have also been partitioned—specially in the case of Urdu, Panjabi and Bengali. Homogenous cultural traditions and literary movements have been split apart, and brother progressive writers find themselves isolated from each other in different countries. Thus it is not possible to include in this article the names and works of many Pakistan writers whose works are still read with great interest in India, even as Indian writers continue to enjoy their old popularity in Pakistan areas. But one name stands out and high on the literary horizon of Pakistan—that of Faiz Ahmed Faiz—a poet whose work has shown remarkable signs of development and maturity during the four years of his imprisonment by the Government of Pakistan on a trumped-up charge of treason against the state. But the life as well as literary work of Faiz needs and demands a detailed and separate article altogether.



GREAT-HEARTED PEOPLE

ONE of the most promising of China's young writers is Chen Teng-ke, author of several interesting novels.¹ Chen Teng-ke was born in 1918. His father was a poor peasant, who, to make ends meet, worked as a labourer on the wharves when there was nothing to do in the fields. His mother washed linen for the village schoolmaster, and for these services he taught the boy for two years. That was the most his parents could do for him: to let him continue his studies was beyond their means.

When Chen was sixteen, his father died, worn out by work that was beyond his strength. The boy was left with a scrap of rented land and a wheelbarrow—the whole of his father's worldly goods. That was in 1934. In 1938 he was forced into the Kuomintang army where he served for two years.

In the winter of 1940 he joined the New Fourth Army, which had liberated his native province of Kiangsu, and became a soldier of the revolution.

A district newspaper correspondent on an assignment in Chen Teng-ke's unit noticed the intelligent and capable soldier and suggested that he become a regular contributor about local events. Before long, the soldier Chen Teng-ke became a staff correspondent of a newspaper for peasants.

The army was the future writer's first real school. An elder comrade, his commander, took him under his wing, reading books with him every day and conversing with him on diverse subjects. When Chen's mentor was killed in battle, another experienced comrade became his teacher.

Chen Teng-ke's first literary effort was a long article about a kindergarten, written in 1946. Soon after, the *Supeipao* published his first story, *Iron Bones*, which met with a warm response among the paper's readers. In fact, peasant theatres immediately put on stage versions of it with great success. *Sister-in-Law Tu*, his next literary work, and *A Grave for the Living*, written in 1950, brought the young writer wide renown in China and were translated into a number of foreign languages.

"From the very beginning of my work in literature, the Party has been my teacher," wrote Chen Teng-ke in the magazine *Wanpei Wenyi*. "If not for the Party, a simple country lad like myself could not have become properly literate; as for becoming a writer, that would never even have entered his head."

In *Sister-in-Law Tu* the individual facets of Chen Teng-ke's talent and the original features of his style were already evident. The author was writ-

¹ See review of the work of the young Chinese writers Kao Yu-pao and Hu-Ke in *Soviet Literature* No. 10, 1953 and No. 1, 1954.

ing from his own experience. In July 1946, when the Fifth Kuomintang Army and 74th Division launched an offensive against the New Fourth Army south of the Huaihe River, the newspaper he was working for sent him to cover the action. He spent more than two months with the partisans; the result was a book in whose heroes and events the readers recognized themselves and their own experiences. "Isn't Sister-in-Law Tu the woman who lived north of the Huaihe?" the author was asked time and again.

The plot of *Sister-in-Law Tu* is a simple one. An ordinary peasant woman's love for her people fills her with undying hatred of their oppressors. It lends her infinite strength, and she becomes the commander of a detachment of "people's avengers" that fights bravely and then joins up with the New Fourth Army.

The book has tremendous moral power. Its heroes go into battle for the truth. They want a better and more just world. Without high-flown words, without affectation, activated by a firm conviction in the justice of their cause and a keen sense of responsibility for the future, they perform feats of real heroism. Surrounded by enemies, the partisans endure hunger and cold without complaint and, when they capture food supplies from the Kuomintang army, they immediately distribute them among the peasants, saving over a thousand lives.

Chen Teng-ke contrasts the high moral standards of the toilers with the crude violence and lawlessness of the Kuomintang. His heroes are defenders of the people, whose finest traits they personify; they help the people conquer their fear of their oppressors and their age-old resignation to fate.

Sister-in-Law Tu won immediate popularity and received favourable notices in the Chinese press, although the critics pointed out its weak points—the somewhat schematic portrayal of secondary characters and an excess of details—weaknesses undoubtedly due to the author's lack of literary experience. Despite its shortcomings, however, the book had unique appeal because of its freshness and sincerity, because of the living truth it conveyed. Chen Teng-ke had lived the life of his heroes and that is what gave his story its tone of sincerity, and its feeling, its vigorous tempo, its tender lyrical notes, its graphic imagery that is closely related to folk art.

A Grave for the Living, Chen Teng-ke's next book, showed much more depth in character portrayal and presented a broader picture of life in the Chinese countryside. The peasants of Hsinhechi, a village in northern Kiangsu, call the house of the local landlord, the cruel and avaricious Sun Tsai-tao, a "grave for the living." The book opens with the words of the bitter little song they have composed about it.

For many long years the Sun family has ridden roughshod over the peasants, but things change when the New Fourth Army arrives in Kiangsu in the winter of 1942, disperses the "committee for the maintenance of order" and sets up a people's government. Fearing the peasants' just wrath, Sun Tsai-tao flees to Chiangnan.

The new government lowers rents and reduces the interest on loans; in 1946 it sets about introducing land reform. The fields are returned to their rightful owners. "The dead village of Hsinhechi begins slowly to come to life, like grass in the spring." Laughter rings out with increasing frequency; the voices of people who have not opened their mouths for years are heard again. No one thinks of the "grave for the living" any more.

But the autumn of 1946 brings bad news. Chiang Kai-shek has launched an offensive against the liberated regions. The People's Liberation Army retreats slowly, enticing the enemy into the heart of the country. In the fighting for Hsinhechi, section commander Liu Ken-sheng is wounded and captured by the enemy. The brutal Kuomintang soldiers make preparations to bury him alive. They order Hsue Lu-shi, an old peasant woman, to dig the grave. She does not dare to disobey, but as soon as the soldiers leave the spot, she and her elder daughter Ta Feng-tzu, at the risk of their lives, dig away the earth and carry off the wounded man. In his place Hsue Lu-shi lays the body of her younger daughter Chi Yue-tzu who was killed in the bombardment of the village.

Hsue Lu-shi dresses the commander in her daughter's clothes. The whole village helps her hide Liu Ken-sheng, or Chi Yue-tzu, as he is now called, from the Kuomintang.

Together with the village activists, Liu Ken-sheng urges the peasants to struggle against the burdensome taxes and levies; and, when the time is ripe, he organizes a rebellion which joins forces with the returning units of the People's Liberation Army.

That, in brief, is the plot.

"In the works of Chen Teng-ke we do not have an author describing events but life itself relating them," wrote the critic Chou Yang. That is true. Chen Teng-ke writes about men and women whom he met day after day, whom he has known from childhood, perceiving in them that which constitutes the essence of the Chinese national character.

Liu Ken-sheng, the hero of the above book, is of the flesh and blood of the people; his every thought is of the people. When he is captured and is expecting to die, he recalls the vow he took when he joined the Party; "I will consider it an honour to shed my blood for the people, to give my life for them!" and the words give him fresh courage.

Jeopardizing their lives, the villagers save Liu Ken-sheng. These peasants are people of great spiritual beauty and foremost among them is old Hsue Lu-shi. Hsue Lu-shi has had more than her share of the trials and tribulations that were the lot of a peasant woman in old China. In her youth, she had with difficulty evaded the importunities of the landlord who wished to make her his concubine. Later the village elder, a rich peasant, brought her husband to his death. Then the entire burden of supporting the family fell on her shoulders. In Hsue Lu-shi a gentle spirit and kind heart go hand in hand with irreconcilable hatred for those who are the cause of the people's misfortunes. To the soldiers defending the village she is like a loving mother; she washes their linen and helps them build fortifications. The episode showing how Hsue Lu-shi and Ta Feng-tzu arrive at the idea of putting Chi Yue-tzu in the empty grave is written with sensitive feeling. "... Take your daughter ..." Ta Feng-tzu begins, and her mother immediately knows what she has in mind.

Ta Feng-tzu looks after the wounded man night and day, and in her great-hearted solicitude her character is unfolded—self-sacrificing, patient, devoted, and at the same time straightforward and resolute. When the peasants gather before the gates of the mansion to protest against the excessive levies, it is she who comes forward, boldly flinging the truth in the landlord's face. It is she who is the moving spirit in her people's struggle.

The well-known Chinese writer Chao Shu-li has composed verses about four of the characters of this book—Liu Ken-sheng, Hsue Lu-shi and her daughters. In an article accompanying *A Grave for the Living*, when it first appeared in magazine form, he wrote: "There are many other people in Chen's book worthy of high praise. And all of them together illustrate our meaning when we speak of the unity between the army and the people."

In this respect old Shen Chang-yu is a particularly interesting character. The reader's first impression of him is not altogether the right one. He seems timid, limited, petty, concerned only for himself and his own welfare. But in face of danger this simple peasant reveals extraordinary steadfastness of spirit. We see him in direct conflict with the enemy. The village activists had meted out richly deserved punishment to their former steward. Now, with the Kuomintang troops back in the village, the landlord's underlings drive the peasants from the surrounding villages, Shen Chang-yu among them, to the willow tree on which the traitor's head has been hung. "Was it your son killed this man?" the landlord asks, turning to Shen Chang-yu. The old man looks long at the people around him, then, drawing himself up, he says: "Yes, it was my son!" "Where is he? Turn him over to us at once!" "He's gone off to join the Liberation Army. Take him from it if you can!"

The embattled people—that is the hero of Chen Teng-ke's book. The author, however, has also shown us men and women who have wavered in their loyalty to the people, and it is to his credit that he has given a realistic and correct picture of how such people were misled and how they realized their error.

Who were they? Mainly Kuomintang soldiers, young peasants who had been forced into the army and corrupted by the demagoguery of their officers and the depravity in the Kuomintang army. The People's Liberation Army always taught its men to treat the Kuomintang soldiers humanely, to regard them as enemies only in battle. When the Kuomintang soldiers arrive in Hsinhechi, when they come into direct contact with the people, they realize with bitterness how basely they have been deceived in being compelled to take up arms against their fathers and brothers.

Troops have been called out to "pacify the rebels." At the gates of the mansion stands a crowd of peasants. They have been standing there doggedly for more than one day. "One of the soldiers, pressed by the crowd, throws down his rifle. 'Only a filthy beast would take blood money from fat Sun Tsai-tao. Let him come out and do his own dirty work!' he cries out, and pushing through the crowd, he disappears. Hearing these words, some of the other soldiers lower their rifles in indecision while others throw them down and follow their comrade."

The book ends on a note of triumph. The liberated villagers are seeing the revolutionary soldiers off to the front. The commander, Liu Ken-sheng is speaking. "Today we congratulate our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters, all the people of Hsinhechi, freed forever now from graves for the living. . . . Our dead have not shed their blood in vain. They have given their lives for the radiant world that is to come. . . ."

In some places the story tends to drag and there are occasional repetitions; but these are details easily remedied. On the whole this is a work of unquestionable talent, and it depicts with honesty and forcefulness the struggle of the Chinese peasants against their oppressors.

The author's close kinship with the people of whom he writes is reflected in the unusual freshness of his language and in the originality of his style. He sees the world through the eyes of his heroes, and that is why he so often borrows his metaphors from peasant life.

Chen Teng-ke is making excellent progress. The magazine *Jenmin wenhsue* recently published two new stories by him—*Children of the Huaihe River* and *Blackie*. His works show him to be a gifted writer who combines a wide knowledge of life with profound respect for the realistic traditions of Chinese literature. They bear eloquent witness to the growing success of the efforts of Chinese literature to master the method of Socialist realism.

— OUR ILLUSTRATIONS —

In our third and fourth issues we publish reproductions of some of the works displayed at the R.S.F.S.R. and Ukrainian art exhibitions held in Moscow in 1954. Both these exhibitions testified to the creative progress of Soviet painters, graphic artists and sculptors.

The painting *Andrei Rublyov* by Alexander Buzovkin (*Soviet Literature*, No. 4) attracted the attention of visitors to the R.S.F.S.R. Art Exhibition. The lively discussions it aroused found their way into the press. "A curious scene was to be observed at the exhibition," the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura* wrote in one review. "Facing this canvas stood a group of people arguing heatedly. One of them objected to the artist's interpretation of the famous Russian 14-15th century painter: 'A blank stare, a false historical background. Andrei Rublyov was a monk—the picture doesn't show it. And certainly paints could not be kept in spoons.' 'But it's the general treatment that's important,' another reported. 'The picture unquestionably suggests Rublyov's inspiration, and for that alone it is to be valued.'"

"The merits of the painting are indeed disputable. . . . But the exhibition committee resolved to admit it not only because of its unusual theme (its author must certainly be given credit for choosing to portray this great master of Russian fine arts), but because its treatment of that theme is just as unusual and leaves no spectator indifferent to it."

Alexander Buzovkin was born in the village of Protasovo, Tula Gubernia, in 1886. In 1914 he graduated at a school of painting, sculpture and architecture. He is chiefly a portrait-painter.

The landscape *On Top of the Taskyl* by Toivo Ryannel (*Soviet Literature*, No. 3) was displayed at the same exhibition. Ryannel was born in 1921 and is a graduate of the Omsk Art School.

The work of Tatyana Yablonskaya is deservedly popular among the Soviet public. Our readers may be familiar with it from earlier reproductions. She submitted several new paintings to the Ukrainian Art Exhibition, among them *On the Dnieper*, reproduced in No. 3. Since her graduation at the Kiev Art Institute in 1940, Tatyana Yablonskaya has been contributing regularly to U.S.S.R. and Ukrainian exhibitions. She is best known for her paintings *Grain* and *Spring*. Yablonskaya was recently elected a corresponding member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Arts.

The present issue also contains reproductions of two busts by A. Kovalev (born in 1916): *Academician V. P. Filatov* and *Heroine of Socialist Labour E. S. Khobita*, and of the painting *To Petrograd* by A. Lopukhov (1925), shown at the Ukrainian Art Exhibition. Both artists are graduates of the Kiev Art Institute.

JOSE HERNANDEZ AND HIS POEM

And here my song begins
To sad *viguela* strain.
The wounds in me remain,
And so my soul is stirred
To sing like lonely bird
That sings to ease his pain.

WITH this sextain, little different from the improvisations of the *payador* minstrels, begins the poem *Martin Fierro* by a famous Argentine poet of last century, Jose Hernandez. Immediately after the publication of the first part of the poem in 1872, it acquired a wide popularity among the common people of Argentina.

Between the years 1872 and 1878 the first part of *Martin Fierro* ran to eleven editions with a total print—unusually large for those times—of 48,000 copies. Apart from that, shortly after the first publication, the poem was circulated in handwritten copies.

An Argentine philologist, F. D. Segovia, records that in his youth in the Entre Rios province, gauchos would gather round a reader of the poem and would listen in silence for hours. Only once in his memory was the silence broken—when a grey-haired old man declared: “Martin Fierro—there’s the real gaucho for you!”

During Hernandez’s life, however, the poem made no impact on the literary world of Argentina. The “established” critics and the self-styled aesthetic poets of Buenos Aires who sedulously followed the Spanish romantics of that period paid no attention to the “common” poetry of Hernandez. Not until a quarter of a century after the first publication of the poem, did the Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones “discover” this work, its deep meaning and originality and bring it to the attention of wide circles of the country’s intellectuals.

Lugones was supported by a well-known literary researcher, Ricardo Rojas, who declared that *Martin Fierro* was a product of the pampas of Argentina just as *Don Quixote* was the product of the plains of Castille.

Thus, although *Martin Fierro* was a welcome guest in the modest homes of the Argentine peasants, it did not find an honourable place in the nation’s literature until long afterwards.

Hernandez, who created with such power the image of Martin Fierro as a man of the people, showed that he not only loved the humble gaucho but also knew his life and surroundings down to the smallest detail.

Jose Hernandez was born on November 10, 1834 in the province of Buenos Aires on a small ranch on the pampas. As a boy he listened for hours on end to folk songs, to his father’s stories of the bravery of the herdsmen, to the legends about lost souls that haunt the pampas at night and about

raids by Indians. He received practically no schooling but he absorbed the poetry of the pampas and had close ties with the people. The fact that he took part later in the civil wars that rent the young Argentine republic enriched his knowledge of the life of the gauchos from whom the armies were mainly recruited.

Life was hard for Jose Hernandez. Many times in those troublous years of political conflict did he change his vocation; he was in turn soldier, stevedore, civil servant and newspaper correspondent. In 1869 he began publishing a small magazine, *El Rio de la Plata*.

He set himself to write a narrative poem about the life of the common people of the pampas, a tragic story which he hoped would "stir public opinion and force people to be interested in the plight of the gaucho."

In the year of publication of the first part of *Martin Fierro*, Hernandez wrote to a friend, Jose Zoilo Miguenas: "I tried, with what success I do not know, to portray a type that would personify our gauchos and concentrate in it their essential feelings, thoughts, and manners of expression. I tried to give that image all the gaucho's rich, lively, colourful imagination, his outbursts of proud self-respect which at times lead to crimes; the impulses and raptures which are inherent in those children of nature whom education has neither polished nor softened."

One must turn to history to understand fully the unusual popularity enjoyed by Hernandez's poem and the reasons which placed it among the best and most loved works of Argentine literature.

In the wide Rio de la Plata region, which now embraces the republic of Uruguay and bordering provinces of Argentina, there were, in the latter part of the 18th and the first part of the 19th century many payador minstrels. Now, however, there exist hardly any records to preserve the payador tradition of oral poetry. Fragments by unknown authors that showed the influence of payador art first appeared about the end of the 18th century. These first records of a genre that was then taking shape gave for the first time in South American poetry a glimpse of the gaucho with his distinctive and picturesque, though sometimes rough, language, and of the life of the pampas with their odours of grasses and horse sweat. For the first time, the poetry of Argentina—which, until the revolution of May 1810, freed the country from colonial rule, had been directly influenced by the literature of Spain's colonial period—began to reflect something of the distinctive life and speech of the people who were taming the wild lands in the distant pampas, people who knew nothing of schools, of churches, and, at times, of laws.

Bartolome Hidalgo, Hilario Ascasubi and Estanislao del Campo were the Argentine poets who gave the first impetus to that new genre which became known in the literature of Argentina as *poesia gauchesca*.

The significance of Jose Hernandez lies in the fact that his *Martin Fierro* marked the highest stage in the development of the folk poetry of the gaucho.

In his remarkable work Hernandez preserved all the traditional forms of payador poetry and the authentic speech of the gaucho which he developed creatively and enriched on its own folk basis. Because of its epic scope and the clearness and simplicity of narration, *Martin Fierro* resembles such classics as *Poema del Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland*. Hernandez took for his narrator-hero a gaucho of the 19th century, a difficult period for the free herdsmen of the pampas. Gauchos were conscripted and sent to the

frontiers to seize new lands from the Indians or were compelled to serve in the armies of political parties that were fighting for control of the country.

Hernandez gave all his great poetic talent to save the peasants from complete impoverishment. He raised his voice in the cause of the gaucho who had once played a decisive part in the liberation of their country from Spanish colonial oppression.

Hernandez saw the destiny of the gaucho as a deeply tragical one, doomed, he believed, to extinction either because of endless bloodshed or bitter poverty.

The transition from feudal to capitalist social relations in Argentina took place about the end of last century. Thousands upon thousands of agricultural "hands" were needed. Foreign peasant immigrants poured into the country. And the once-free herdsmen of the pampas, weakened by wars and lacking the subsidies given to immigrants, were forced to hire themselves out as peons.

Hernandez, who looked back into the heroic past of the gauchos, could not understand the true reasons for this change. However, he fought against the despotism of local authorities and the policy of the government towards the peasants and he could not bring himself to believe that such a fight was hopeless. He dedicated his whole life to the "fight for the gaucho," and his work was a reflection of that fight.

The first part of *Martin Fierro*, "The Flight," tells the story of Fierro's peaceful life in his native pampas with his wife and children, his forcible recruitment and despatch to the frontier forces. Apart from his soldiering, Fierro, like his comrades on the frontier, worked from morning till night on the fields of his commander and suffered dire hardships:

*I built adobe walls
I built corrál and road,
The master's wheat I sowed,
I tilled the master's soil.
My pay for all my toil?—
A curse, a greater load.*

Three years later Fierro deserted and returned to his native parts, but he found neither his house nor his wife; his children had gone elsewhere to search for work and bread.

He swore revenge against the local authorities who had robbed him of home and family, and became a *gaucho malo*, an outlaw. He was forced to flee to the pampas where for long he lived alone, hiding in the reeds along the rivers like a hunted animal. Once he was surrounded by a mounted posse. Armed only with a knife, he pitted himself against a dozen soldiers, prepared to sell his life dearly. But one of the constables, a sergeant named Cruz, went over to his side and the survivors of the posse scattered. Fierro and Cruz, evading their pursuers, crossed the frontier and gave themselves up to the Indians.

That is the simple theme of the first part of the poem, the constant note of which is persecution—the persecution of a free gaucho and the turning of him into a soldier, and then into an impoverished peasant who became an outlaw.

With great artistry Hernandez tells how, little by little, the mind and spirit of an ordinary man changed during the dire trials that befell him.

The three years that Martin Fierro spent in the hard conditions of a frontier post made him understand many things. The poet, speaking through the mouth of his narrator-hero, attacks governmental corruption and injustice and the cruel abuse of power by the *alcaldes*, judges and other provincial bigwigs; but the poet never completely lost the faith that much could be changed. That faith resounds at the end of the first part of the poem when Fierro and his friend Cruz defy fate:

*Undaunted we must face
The ills of every kind.
One day, my friend, we'll find
The fox that came to raid
At last the score has paid—
And left his skin behind.*

In 1879, seven years after the publication of the first part of the poem, the second part, "The Return," appeared.

After spending many years among the Indians, Martin Fierro returns to his native parts, meets his sons who had grown up without him, listens to the sad story of their wanderings and gives them his fatherly counsel on how a man should live:

*Perhaps the day may come
When God will bless our land—
But for the work in hand,
To make the iron glow
It must be from below
That smilthy fire is fanned.*

Just as Martin Fierro had spent all his forces in warding off the cruel blows of life, the author himself spent all his forces in his fruitless efforts to better the gaucho's lot. But his faith in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong never left him.

Martin Fierro is not an epic poem in the traditional sense of the word, but it is justly considered a national epic of Argentina, describing as it does the life of the ordinary peasant against a background of historical events in that country at the end of last century.

Jose Hernandez, poet, humanist, unrivalled authority on the folklore of a country that he loved and served, died on September 21, 1886. After his death *La Prensa Española* published an article which well expressed the importance of the author of *Martin Fierro*:

"When all the so-called sages and intellectuals who thought and still think so little of your folk-improvisations have disappeared from this world; when death claims those great capitalists and their ephemeral grandeur, as it has claimed you, the poetry of a modest troubadour will live on, never to die."

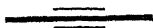
And Jose Hernandez himself had the sure conviction that those for whom he had fought all his life would never forget him:

*And when death comes my way
'Twill bring no fear for me;
One thing is clear to me—
When in the grave I've lain
The gaucho on the plain
Will shed a tear for me.*

Although *Martin Fierro* is concerned with only one period in the history of the Argentine people, although Jose Hernandez somewhat overestimated the part the gaucho played in the formation of a new nation's culture, although the free gauchos themselves and their distinctive life disappeared, this poem, the best example of Argentine national poetry, has not lost its validity.

Martin Fierro is well-known and well loved in the Argentina of today. The peons, the city workers, the intellectuals, all see in the image of Martin Fierro the embodiment of the folk wisdom, unrelenting fight for justice and bravery of those gauchos who at the beginning of last century fought against colonial yoke.

The proud and free spirit of Martin Fierro lives on among the people of Argentina who know how to value freedom and independence.



GREAT ANNIVERSARIES



HANS ANDERSEN

(On the 150th Anniversary of His Birth)

HANS Christian Andersen was born on April 2, 1805 in the provincial Danish town of Odense. His father, a poor cobbler, died when Hans was still very young, and from childhood Hans experienced want and hardship. Later on the experience of childhood found its way into Andersen's tales of people living in dingy little rooms to whom potatoes are a rare luxury and the green shoot of a pea is a whole flower-bed; rooms where poor washerwomen who spend their days standing knee-deep in water take to drink for the sake of warmth. After a few years at the poor school, Hans worked in tobacco and clothes factories. It was his mother's wish that he should become a tailor, but Hans dreamed of the stage. On September 6, 1819, he arrived in Copenhagen with an empty purse but with a firm belief in his artistic calling. Many long hard years of penury were to pass, however, before Hans found his true path in life.

It was during those needy years that Andersen began to write. The best of his early works, *A Journey on Foot from Holman's Canal to the East Point of Amager*, published in 1819, is remarkable for its fresh and original humour and rich imagery. In 1829 Andersen managed to tour Denmark, and in 1831 he paid his first visit to Germany. The two journeys provided him with a rich store of new impressions. But it was his journey to Italy that made the deepest imprint on Andersen's mind. The life of

the Italian poor, the magnificent scenery, the immortal works of Italian art—all contributed to his first novel *The Improvisatore* (1835). The novel was successful both in Denmark and abroad. In the same year, inspired by his success, Andersen published his first collection of the fairy-tales which were to make his name famous throughout the world.

Though Andersen is best known for his fairy-tales, he also worked in other genres. The many lyrical verses he wrote include such deeply patriotic poems as *Denmark, My Motherland* and *Jutland*. He also wrote nearly thirty plays. Some of these plays were written for the people's theatre (the Casino) that was opened in Copenhagen in 1848 and here, naturally enough since the plays were intended for a democratic audience, we meet again the fairy-tale characters Ole Luköie, the Dustman and Elder Tree Mother. Andersen's best plays are inspired with the ideas of democracy and humanism, ideas which are expressed particularly strongly in the novels *The Improvisatore*, *Only a Fiddler*, *O.T.*, *The Two Baronesses*, and in the story *Lucky Peter*. The characters in these books, talented and good-hearted people of simple birth, have to struggle for life and happiness. Some of them, like the Italian *improvisatore* Antonio, achieve success; others perish, like the Danish fiddler Christian. Andersen gives vivid pictures of the life of the poor and exposes the injustice of the society in which they live. Finally, Andersen was a great master of the traditional romantic genre of travel essays. In these essays, written in lively conversational style, the humour and ideas that afterwards blossomed forth in his wonderful fairy-tales first made their appearance.

The fairy-tales brought Andersen world renown. They made him one of the most popular children's writers of his own time and with future generations. In the fairy-tale Andersen found the artistic form that gave the fullest expression to his humanist ideas; in the fairy-tale he achieved the highest pitch of realism in 19th-century Danish literature.

Andersen found a rich source of inspiration in folk poetry, from which he drew plots, ideas and characters for many of his fairy-tales. He placed great value on folk literature, which, as he put it, reflects the history of the people in their deeds and sufferings. He used to say that "the bird of folk song sings of things that no man dare speak of in grief or joy, and though she sings allegorically her song is understood by all." Andersen's fairy-tales are permeated with this allegory that is understood by all. That is why they are so popular not only with children, but with adult readers as well. Children like them for their simple and entertaining stories, the fairy-tale poetry of their characters, their rich and lively language. But it is only when they grow up that they begin to understand what wise reflections on life lie behind these simple tales of people and animals, flowers and toys.

Though he wrote fairy-tales, Andersen was a poet of reality. He loved life in all its richness and variety and knew how to put the beauty of the real world into poetry. "It often seems to me," he wrote, "that every fence, every flower is saying to me: 'Just look at me and you'll have my story.' And if I do choose to look, I get that new story." During his travels abroad he took much interest in the life of other peoples. Sometimes his fairy-tales are set in Greece and Switzerland (*The Bond of Friendship*, *The Ice-Maiden*), sometimes he uses the themes and images of German, Norwegian, and Oriental folk-lore (*The Tinder Box*, *The Elf-Hill*, and others); but for the most part the scene of his fairy-tales is his native Denmark, where there

come to life the Danish folk legends and popular beliefs that he heard in childhood, the themes and imagery of Danish folk-lore, Denmark itself with its beech forests and dunes, its peasant huts and old estates, the customs of its people.

In his works Andersen portrayed the world around him as it really was, with its wealth and poverty, its social injustice and inequality.

The democratic tendency in Andersen's fairy-tales showed itself not only in his liking for the ordinary people, poor but honest, brave and noble-hearted, but also in his dislike for the world of rich and titled good-for-nothings. The capitalist-landowner Denmark of Andersen's time was ruled by the "arrogance of blood and money," a heartless and narrow-minded philistinism hostile to everything beautiful and talented that sprang from the people. Andersen depicts this class and money arrogance in a number of realistic and fairy-tale characters. The haughty general who wins his medals not in battle but in drawing-rooms (*The Son of a Doorman*); the aristocratic couple, incapable of appreciating anything genuinely noble and beautiful (*The Gardener and the Gentry*); the heartless burgomaster (*She Was Good for Nothing*); the pampered princess (*The Princess on the Pea*); the stupid and conceited ducks and drakes (*In the Duck-Yard*); the money-pig stuffed with wealth (*The Money-Pig*); the gilded whip-top, a courtier who loves being whipped (*The Lovers*).

Andersen created many vividly realistic characters from among the ordinary people, giving them such universal appeal that they have gained a permanent place not only in Danish but in world literature as well. Take, for example, the little beggar girl selling matches who dies of cold and hunger in the street (*The Little Match Girl*), or the poor washerwoman overstrained by heavy work (*She Was Good for Nothing*). The old woman who ends her days in the alms-house, the wet-nurse who has to give her own child away to a strange family, the apprentice who cannot marry the girl he loves because he is too poor—such are the people whose lives Andersen described with profound sympathy and understanding. Even when they are shown in fairy-tale setting, these characters retain the noble and attractive qualities which are typical of the people and which help them to triumph over the forces of the magic world. In Andersen's best tales we find among these qualities not only kindness and shrewd wisdom but a courageous determination to fight for one's happiness. "Never think about falling, and you will never fall!"—the motto of the brave mountaineer Rudi—expresses the daring and courage of the ordinary man.

Many of Andersen's tales show what happens to gifted men from the people when confronted with the social injustice and inequality of the world. Such are the tales of the great Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen and the German poet Schiller (*Children's Prattle, The Old Church Bell*) and the autobiographical tales (*The Son of a Doorman, The Golden Boy, and The Ugly Duckling*). Some of the tales have a happy ending. Having passed through all kinds of trouble and humiliation, the talented son of the people overcomes the hostility of the dignitaries and the wealthy and wins fame. But there are also tragic fairy-tales in which talent perishes among those who are only concerned with "stuffing their crops" (*In the Duck-Yard, A Leaf from the Sky and A Metal Pig*).

Though he showed up vital social problems, though he depicted the oppression and poverty of the people, though he portrayed the characters of simple people with great warmth of feeling, Andersen did not, however,

grasp the fact that the people can gain a better life only by struggle. And although Andersen realized that "the muse of the new century wears a Garibaldi hat," and even intended to write a novel about the July days of 1830 in France, his intention was never accomplished. All that we have is the fairy-tale-like *Picture-Book Without Pictures* in which Andersen draws a touching portrait of a boy from the people dying at the foot of the French throne on the day when the people storm into the king's palace. The revolutionary movement frightened Andersen. He thought that society's ills could be cured by the moral perfection of humanity, by preaching philanthropy.

The wave of revolution that swept Europe, including Denmark, in 1848 could not but have some effect on Andersen's work. On the one hand, we find him seeking new paths, striving to achieve a more realistic portrayal of life, turning less to fairy-tales and creating a new genre of the "everyday story," which is built up on some everyday event, some small but significant happening, often with a bearing on social contradictions. But on the other hand the sentimental and religious tendency in his works, the desire to reconcile the sharp contradictions of life increases.

Nevertheless, even at the close of his life Andersen remains a democratic writer, who never forgets that he himself comes from the people, a writer who wants his work to serve the interests of the people. Andersen was always against art for the *élite*, art for the benefit of the privileged classes (*The Nightingale*). The philistine, petty-bourgeois understanding of life and art was branded by Andersen in his fairy-tale *The Snail and the Rose Tree*, in which he contrasts a snail living in its shell, interested only in study of its petty self, with the proud rose tree that generously gives people beautiful roses.

Andersen clearly understood the social significance of his art. "I feel how great and sacred is the mission of the poet who has been given the power to speak to thousands," he wrote. Even when he achieved universal recognition and enjoyed the favours of many representatives of high society, he continued to address his art predominantly to the broad reading public. That is why all his fairy-tales and "everyday stories" retained their simple, easily grasped forms, their genuinely folk humour, their rich and colourful language. Disregarding the reproaches of those critics who accused him of writing ungrammatically, Andersen always strove to "write as people speak." He himself read his works from the platform in the "Workers' Union" and noted with pride how enthusiastically they were received by the workers and craftsmen, and also by the democratic audience of the Casino. "My kinship with the people came out in the fact that I wrote in the people's language," he insisted in one of his letters.

In these words Andersen expressed his understanding of the national tradition. For him it meant, above all, absorbing the traditions of folk art. That is the message of one of his best tales *The Gardener and the Gentry* (1871), in which he creates the autobiographical character of the gardener Larsen, who finds beauty in the field and forest plants that grow on Danish soil, in the noble customs of his people, while his titled masters enthuse over imported foreign shrubs.

Andersen's attitude to the national tradition was influenced by his democratic views. In contrast to the reactionary romanticists, he did not idealize Denmark's medieval past. In most of his tales the middle ages are depicted as a time of feudal strife, oppression of the peasants,

superstition and obscurantism (*The Bishop of Børglum and His Relations, The Godfather's Album, The Goloshes of Fortune*).

Andersen's gaze was directed on the future. It was not for nothing that he welcomed the scientific discoveries of his contemporaries, the building of railways, the invention of the telegraph, photography, and so on. (*A Bit of Pearl Necklace, The Big Sea Snake, Ven and Glen*). In one of the chapters of his book *In Sweden* he expressed his faith in progress and his admiration for man as the conqueror of nature. He portrayed reactionary romanticism, which keeps its eyes fixed on the past, as a decrepit old queen whose domains are stricken with death. In contrast to the old woman, Andersen shows us the genius of science as a young man full of energy who has the future before him and who drives away the phantoms of death.

Andersen's work has exerted a great influence on the development of democratic Danish literature. His humanist traditions have been taken up and developed by writers of later generations, among whom first mention belongs to the great writer Martin Andersen Nexø. Andersen's work has also been of great significance in world democratic culture.

Andersen hated war, which he described as a "disgusting monster that feeds on blood and burning cities." He welcomed friendship and cultural intercourse between the peoples. Proud of his country's contribution to the treasure-store of world culture, he took a warm interest in the achievements of the national cultures of other countries. He was personally acquainted with Dickens, Heine, Victor Hugo, and others of his great contemporaries, and he showed a great interest in Russia and Russian literature, which he described as being "in full bloom."

The interest was always mutual. Russian democratic criticism in the person of Dobrolyubov placed high value on Andersen's work. Gorky loved and valued his fairy-tales. Translations of Andersen's works began appearing in Russia in large numbers in the 'forties of the last century. Since the October Revolution his works have gone through 185 editions, totalling 6,836,000 copies. They have been translated into 32 languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. Andersen's fairy-tales have been staged at many Soviet theatres.

At its Stockholm conference in 1954, the World Peace Council appealed to the democratic movement in all countries to celebrate in 1955 the 150th anniversary of the birth of Hans Christian Andersen, whose work has served the cause of humanism and democracy.

In response to the World Peace Council's appeal, the Soviet public are widely celebrating the jubilee of the great writer. Many publishing houses have produced new editions of his fairy-tales. The State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry is preparing for publication a collection of Andersen's fairy-tales, which contains new translations of his best works.

Andersen's name is respected and loved by democratically-minded people throughout the world—and feared by democracy's enemies.

Today, when the peoples of the whole world are filled with an irresistible desire to prevent a new war, the work of this great figure of Danish and world culture has become a powerful means of encouraging cultural intercourse. His work reaches the hearts of all peoples. It belongs to the camp of peace and democracy, which with love and respect celebrates his 150th anniversary.

YULIANA YAKHNINA

PROFILES

YELENA ZLATOVA

EMILIAN BUKOV

EMILIAN Bukov was an established poet with four published volumes of verse behind him by the time his name became familiar to Soviet readers.

Bukov was born in 1909 in the small town of Kiliya, in southern Bessarabia. He was one of a family of six children, but as he was the only son, his father, a Moldavian gardener, could send him to the local elementary school. That was at the time when Bessarabia had been wrested away from Soviet Russia and made part of Rumania. The region was considered unreliable. In fact, as far as the Rumanian secret police were concerned, the words "Bessarabian" and "Bolshevik" were practically synonymous. And so the Rumanian kingdom's concern for its "newly acquired province" chiefly took the shape of intensified police tyranny, with searches and arrests carried on indiscriminately.

It was in this atmosphere of police terror on the one hand, and of the secret hopes placed in the Soviet Union by the finest representatives of the people and of frequent outbursts of rebellion on the other, in this tense atmosphere heralding the approach of a storm, that young Emilian Bukov's character and outlook on life were formed.

A year before he would normally have left school, he was expelled for wrapping his books in a Russian newspaper. Among those books the authorities found his first efforts at writing poetry—verses about the Danube fishermen and their struggle against the "lopataři" (the inspectors who protected the interests of the state fishing monopoly), and about Terent, a leader of the fishermen. That, of course, aggravated his "guilt." He was allowed to return to school by the efforts of his singing teacher, for he had a good voice and often took the teacher's place (a very convenient arrangement for the latter).

In 1924, when Bukov was fifteen years old, the country was shaken by the Tatar Bunar revolt. The proclamation of Soviet power in the village of Tatar Bunar and the establishment of a republic to suppress which the government was obliged to send out naval as well as land forces, the heroic resistance of the rebels and the savage treatment they received, all this, described by Henri Barbusse as the "drama of Tatar Bunar," left the deepest impression on the mind of the future poet.

News of the Tatar Bunar revolt, its cruel suppression, and the subse-

quent farcical "trial" of the rebels swept the world. Henri Barbusse specially attended the trial to be able to tell the world the truth about Tatar Bunar. His pamphlet *Hangmen* won broad popularity. Many years later, after the liberation of Bessarabia, Bukov wrote two stories about the Tatar Bunar rebels: *Fraternal Grave* and *The First Shot*.

Among Bukov's teachers at school was one, Ivan Steriopulo, who encouraged the lad's eager desire for knowledge. He was the first to explain to him the meaning and aims of revolutionary struggle, and it was he who helped him to study the Russian language. Steriopulo took an active part in the Tatar Bunar revolt and was shot for it. His execution was a heavy blow to the boy.

Bukov's father wanted him to become a gardener, but the youth was so determined to acquire an education that he left home. There were no secondary schools in Kiliya and so he went first to Izmail and then to Kishinev. There he worked at a furniture factory, sang in a choir, painted signboards, coached pupils to earn the money to support himself and pay his fees in the Kishinev school and later at the University of Bucharest.

Bukov first began to appear in print in the early 'thirties, with poems of protest against slave labour, unemployment, war, poverty, hunger, and also against hypocritical "salon poetry." One of the earliest of them, *Giant March*, made it quite clear that his purpose was to write of the workers, of the unemployed, "burdened with unwanted hands," of peasants and hungry children.

But it was not to make a fetish of suffering that Bukov chose these themes and these heroes. He was a foe of pessimism and of stagnation. Images suggesting tempestuous, irresistible motion were his favourites. The urge for motion was to be seen even in the titles he chose: *Giant March*, *March of Time*, *Forward!*, *Motor-March*.

Many of those early poems, however, were of a rather vague or abstract character. An aura of romantic ambiguity veils the figure of *Youth Clanking His Chains*, upon whose face "prison bars cast the shadow of a cross." Even more vague is the poet's representation of the hostile forces opposed to the warrior. He often tended to deal with cosmic images instead of real events.

Only gradually did Bukov adopt the standpoint of realism. Step by step he drew nearer to that position, until what is heard in *The Cry from the Pit*, written in response to a big miners' strike, is not the cry of a solitary man flung by life into a slough of despair and capable only of cursing his lot, but the mighty threatening voice of an oppressed class aware of its unity and its strength.

The hero of this poem is the masses, among whom no individual figures or portraits are yet to be discerned. The working man as an individualized hero with a simple human name and his own personal life story first appeared in Bukov's poetry in 1934, in poems like *Ion, the Son of Maria* and *A Miner in Court*.

In this period Bukov's range of interests grew broader: world events began to draw a keen response from him. And so in 1935 we find him writing *Letter to Chiu Wuh-kan* and then *No Pasaran*, dedicated to fighting Spain, and *A Negro's Prayer*, a poem tracing the development of a colonial slave's naive faith into "sacrilegious fury":

*I shall pray to the gods with clenched fists,
My curses shall rise in a simoom.
The Negroes shall sympathize with me—
They will laugh
With the bitter laughter of the meek,
And the laughter of slaves is more terrible than their tears.*

The young poet's passionate poems of protest contrasted sharply with the decadent poetry prevalent in Rumania in the 'thirties. That poetry sought to distract the reader's attention from realities. The esoteric, bizarre imagery of its practitioners, who represented the dominant trend in Rumanian poetry, made their verses unintelligible to any but the initiated. There was a poetry of hopeless pessimism, blank despair and death. As for social motives, these, they said, had no place in poetry.

In substance, Bukov fought that type of poetry with every line he wrote. In some cases, in fact, his poems were frankly polemic. *No Title*, a poem published in 1937, was dedicated "to the decadence poets" who "have forgotten how to laugh or to cry, who no longer understand their own language." To their "tearful sighs" the poet opposes the laughter which "lights the stars at night"; he mocks those who "grind out unwanted, drivelling verses," whose "weary gaze roams sadly over life."

Equally polemic in tone is his poem *In Crayons* in which he paints a wintry city landscape from the point of view of what it means to an unemployed man: the storm "tears the air to tatters" and he has no coal, the snow "powders the quivering face of the city" and he has no firewood and his boots are worn through. The juxtaposition of the beauty of the natural scene and the impoverished condition of the common man in the capitalist world shows up the hypocritical nature of "art for art's sake." This does not mean that the poet objects to lyrical poetry in principle. No, he would be happy to write about love, about nature, about beauty, but:

*When the beggar has no bread,
When the workless, with rain, grows numb and unfeeling,
A blue April sky seems heavy as lead
And weighs on him like a smoke-blackened ceiling.
One should like to speak words of gold,
With a voice as clear as the skies,
But a scoundrel-policeman, cruel and cold,
With his fist turns my words to cries.*

(I Charged My Letters with Dynamite)

Only some day still to come, in a land of the radiant future can he picture man as "whole, pure, great, the ideal man." In his fancy he sees the day of joy that will be the prologue of the years to come.

Bukov's poems were rarely published in the pre-Soviet period. The slender volumes that did appear were printed at the expense of the Communist Party of Rumania. Not always could he put his own name to his work. *Labour Boiling Angry* came out under the pen-name Radu Berch; *The Sun Speaks* was signed Eugene Radu.

The Rumanian secret police were fully aware of the power of Bukov's poetry and did their best to suppress it. Copies of *Labour Boiling Angry* were confiscated and Bukov himself was persecuted by the police. When he revisited Kiliya in 1937, he was arrested and tried for reading his poem

Lenin in public, but as he was being brought to the Izmail district court, he made his escape.

June 28, 1940, the historic day of the liberation of Bessarabia and its reunion with the Soviet Union, marked a turning point in Bukov's creative work as well as in his life. Now that "dawn had broken over the Bessarabian hut, over the hard lot of the farm hand," the poet could at last breathe freely. The poems he wrote in those days were hymns of joy flowing from a brimming heart. Again and again he sounded the note of hopes come true:

*I remember July and those days—
Days that Moldavia shall never forget,
As the blind will never forget the first rays
When back the power of sight they get.*

Despite his active opposition to the school of poetry in fashion, Bukov had to some extent been unconsciously influenced by its ideas of form. A penchant for complex, sometimes even bizarre images, erratic jumps from one thought to another, occasional excursions into the abstract showed that he still had a long way to go to achieve the creative maturity that brings with it simplicity and lucidity of verse, making clarity of expression add to the power of a thought or image. Besides, his poems were primarily intended to be read aloud to an audience, and then the intonations of the living voice, facial expression and gestures all played their part. Now, when the opportunity came to publish his work freely, simplicity and clarity of form became more imperative.

Above all else, however, Bukov was faced with the need for deeper knowledge of Soviet life. Otherwise he would find himself left with nothing more than enthusiastic but general and abstract terms which did well enough for odes and hymns but could not give concrete expression to the actualities of the world about him. He had to penetrate the essence of numerous phenomena new to him if he wanted to present a clear picture of life, to bring out its typical elements, not merely glide along its surface. He had to learn to recognize and understand forms of struggle between the new and the old that were wholly unfamiliar to him—the new conflict inherent in the Socialist system. Naturally, all this took time. It was a process of growth that could not be accomplished at once, and in the course of it he experienced certain growing pains.

A few days before the first anniversary of the liberation of Bessarabia, the war broke out. The poet worked hard during the war; he wrote for newspapers and the radio and his angry words as a Soviet patriot were blows struck "at the four-fingered, sharp-clawed swastika."

It was in those war years, too, that Bukov first began writing on historical subjects. First came *Stefan's Mother*, a short poem based on a legend about the struggle against the Turks, then some poems in the heroic vein portraying the Haiduks or heroes of the "forest army," the people's avengers, and then, turning to the recent past, he produced the long poem *Kotovskiy Lives*, about that famous hero of the Civil War. This was his first attempt at a long poem and it was not altogether successful. The fault lay with his treatment of the subject in the manner of a fanciful tale, with excessive use of hyperbole, so that the human features of Kotovskiy, the soldier of the Revolution, are quite lost in a welter of exaggerations.

The same period saw the publication of two small volumes of Bukov's verse—I *See Thee, Moldavia* and *Spring on the Dniester*—in Russian translations.

After the war, besides depicting contemporary Soviet life, Bukov drew inspiration from the folk-lore of his people. His *Andriesh*, a tale in verse for children, brings together the characters of many Moldavian folk tales. The central figure—the positive hero typical of most Moldavian tales—is Andriesh, a shepherd boy who has lost his sheep. With him are his faithful dog Lupar and the prophetic lamb Miorika. The poet relates the adventures that befall Andriesh in his search for his lost flock and shows the ultimate triumph of truth and justice and the strength that lies in the unity of all the oppressed.

In 1946 Bukov was elected a member of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. For five years he was a Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Moldavian S.S.R. Discharging the duties of this high office, brought the poet much wider experience of life and broadened his horizons. Logically enough, it was in this period that he produced his major work, a narrative poem called *My Country*, describing the developments that utterly altered the face of Moldavia: the victory of the collective-farm system, electrification of the countryside, the cultural revolution.

The story told in the poem centres about the family of an elderly farm hand by the name of Ion Plemade. Each of his six children has found his special place in life. The eldest, Gheorghe, is the best wine grower in the village. During the war he was a partisan fighter in Moldavia and then, with the units of the Soviet Army, helped to liberate his native village. Mitru evacuated the livestock eastward and then found himself in a village near Moscow and remained to work in a Russian collective farm. Nirsha becomes a tractor driver. Lyana joins with her fellow villagers after the war in organizing the first collective farm in the district. Young Sandu goes to Kishinev to study, becomes an electrician and returns to help to bring electricity to his native village. The very youngest, Ionel, is still a schoolboy, but does what he can to help his elders.

In *My Country* Bukov proved a master of the epic form. Formerly chiefly a poet of the city and the working class, he made a deep study of the life of the liberated Moldavian village and drew a full-blooded realistic picture of it.

In 1948-50 Bukov wrote *The Storeys Rise*, a novel of post-war life in Moldavia, in which he sought to show the altered forms of the struggle between the new and the old and the different kinds of social camouflage adopted by men either hostile or indifferent, by careerists, bureaucrats, petty thieves, demagogues. Although this novel has quite a few good points, it is largely didactic and cannot be counted among Bukov's best works.

Since the war Bukov has dealt with a broader range of themes. A subject that touches him particularly is the co-operation of the peoples of the Soviet Union, their cultural intercourse, the consonance of their literatures. He has also broadened his "geographical" range to include not only Moldavia, but also Moscow and Kiev and the Volga-Don project. To the latter he dedicated a cycle of poems.

With his extensive experience of life, the lessons he has learned in the struggle for a genuinely militant poetry and his increased poetic skill, Emilian Bukov, one of the most talented writers of Moldavia, has won a place of honour in the multi-national Soviet literature.

MISCELLANY

MAYAKOVSKY ABROAD

(New Items Acquired by the Mayakovsky State Library and Museum)

The Mayakovsky Museum has recently acquired many items testifying to the interest displayed in Mayakovsky's work in various countries.

The 60th anniversary of the birth of the poet was widely observed in the People's Republic of China. The museum has received copies of the numerous articles about Mayakovsky that appeared in magazines and newspapers and photographs of memorial meetings in Shanghai and Peking, as well as a Chinese edition of Mayakovsky's poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, translated by the poet Yu Chen.

Addressing a Mayakovsky memorial meeting, the Chinese writer Tsao Ching-hua said: "We are certain that no matter how hard the enemy tries, there will be no silencing the great poet's clarion call:

*Men, my comrades,
Proclaim the world throughout!
that war shall not break out!*

In their long struggle for liberation the Chinese people have always remembered Mayakovsky as a friend and comrade who, in 1924, roared "Hands Off China!" from the pages of *Izvestia*, and in his *A Note to China*, addressed the toiling masses of China in the name of all Soviet people:

*Your hand
of lasting friendship
O China's toiling millions!*

Despite the ban against Mayakovsky's works during the years of Kuomintang reaction, his poems did reach the Chinese reading public. Today they are widely known all over the country and are an important influence among the youth.

The Korean people, too, paid tribute to the poet on the 60th anniversary of his birth. Residents of Phyöngyang gathered at a memorial meeting at the Mount Moranbong underground theatre where the writer Li Gi Yen delivered a re-



Photo exhibition dedicated to Mayakovsky displayed on the streets of Phyöngyang.

port on the poetry of Mayakovsky and the poet Li Dan made a short speech. Then followed readings by Korean actors of Mayakovsky's shorter verse and excerpts from his poem *Good!* Much interest was shown in the exhibition—"Mayakovsky, the Greatest and the Most Talented of Soviet Poets"—on display at the entrance to the theatre. The Mayakovsky Museum has received photographs taken at the meeting and about a dozen articles on Mayakovsky, most of them discussing the poet as a fighter for peace.

The first translations of Mayakovsky into Vietnamese have arrived from the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. The translator is the poet Hoang-Thong, and the collection contains excerpts from *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Good!, Homel, Left March, We Can't Believe It and The Best Verse*. The collection is printed on thin, yellowish paper in a slim volume that came off the press in 1954. It was printed in a forest underground print-shop as a militant book of revolutionary significance. Delegates from the Vietnamese Art and Literature Society, who paid our museum a visit in 1954, wrote on the fly-leaf of this book: "Mayakovsky's verses helped sustain the fighting spirit of the Vietnamese people in their

musicians," he once said, half seriously. "Their language needs no dictionary and is not dependent on translators." In 1929, when the Austrian poet Hugo Huppert told him that he was planning to translate his poems into German, Mayakovsky remarked: "You know, I've thought about translations a great deal. Think of arriving in Berlin with a book called 'Mayakovsky in German'! The idea thrills me! How else can my poems get into the heads of the German youth whom the fascists are getting ready to dupe?"

Now Mayakovsky's work is easily available to the youth of the German Democratic Republic. Translations of his poems appear in magazines and are put out in volume form. In 1953, when the poet's 60th anniversary was observed, German readers received a new one-volume edition of Mayakovsky's works translated by Hugo Huppert, containing a much larger selection than the one issued in 1946.

In Czechoslovakia much attention is being paid to the translation of Mayakovsky. A two-volume edition of selected poems in J. Tauler's translation was issued in Prague in 1953. Mayakovsky is also being translated in Poland, Bul-



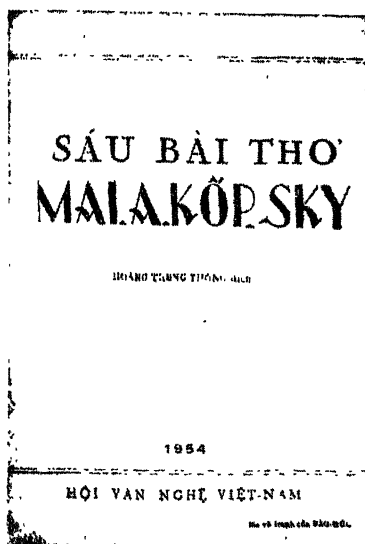
Mayakovsky's play The Bathhouse at the Theatre of Comedy in Prague.

difficult and heroic battle for the liberation of their country."

Mayakovsky always dreamed of getting his poems to the foreign reader. "All my life I have envied painters and

garia, Hungary, Rumania, Albania. His poems play a part in the efforts of those nations to build a new life.

In January 1954 *The Bathhouse* had a successful opening at the Czech



Collection of Mayakovsky's poems in Vietnamese.



Selected poems by Mayakovsky in Japanese.

Theatre of Comedy in Prague. The Mayakovsky Museum received a large number of photographs of the production, appraised in the Czech press as a theatrical event of social significance. The play, under the title of *A Cold Shower*, was first performed in Prague by the Disk Youth Studio in February 1948, at the time when the counter-revolutionary plot against the People's Democracy had just been crushed. The play conveyed to the audience the sharp urgency and power of Mayakovsky's

satire which castigated time-servers and political adventurers of every description.

By now Mayakovsky has been translated into as many as 30 languages, including Arabic, Persian and the languages of India. The Museum has received the first translation of the poet's works into Japanese, a collection containing 25 verses and an excerpt from *Good!* translated by Ogasawara Toyoki.

N. REFORMATORSKAYA

New Translations in 1955

Each year sees an increase in the number of new works by foreign writers translated and published in Moscow. The Moscow Publishing House of Foreign Literature is planning to put out 462 books this year, that is about 10 per cent more than in 1954.

In the field of the natural and exact sciences the Soviet reader will be given an opportunity to acquaint himself with monographs and collections of articles. Among the works on mathematics and physics there are those of S. Mandelbrojt and G. de Vaucouleurs of France, R. Nevanlinna of Finland, H. Schlichting of Germany, S. K. Mitra the Indian geophysicist, J. C. Wilson the British

physicist. In chemistry, translations of works by C. K. Ingold of England, H. R. Kruyt of Netherlands and by W. Hückel of Germany will be published among others. A great number of symposiums and separate works are devoted to the problems of biology, geology and agriculture.

There is considerable variety in the list of sociological and political literature. There has been published a work by S. Chatterji and D. Datta on the ancient philosophy of India, while works by Fan Wen-lan and Kuo Mo-jo, historians, the selected works of Harry Pollitt, William Z. Foster's *The Negro People in American History*, H. K. Wells' *Pragma-*

tism—*Philosophy of Imperialism*, Roger Garaudy's study of the materialist theory of cognition and the works by Japanese historians on the history of modern Japan, a collection of articles and speeches by the Italian statesman Pietro Nenni, and many other works on philosophy, history, economics and law are listed for publication.

Books dealing with specific problems of the Indo-European languages (a work by E. Benveniste of France on the formation of names in the Indo-European languages and a collection of articles on the German dialectology) and monographs such as that of L. Hakulinen of Finland on the system and history of the modern Finnish language, and M. Rasanen of Finland on the problems of phonetics in the Turkic languages are included into the plan.

In 1955 the Soviet reader will receive much new fiction by foreign writers translated into Russian; the list includes novels, collections of short stories, plays and articles.

Among the books to be published in 1955 figure works by writers of the People's Democracies, including *New Soil*, a novel by Pal Szabo that received a Kossuth award; *Tobacco* a novel by Dimitr Dimov of Bulgaria, an International Peace Prize winner; *We Can Manage It Ourselves*, novel by T. Svatoptluk of Czechoslovakia; *Nicoara Potcoava*, a historical novel by Mihail Sadoveanu of Rumania.

Polish literature is represented by a collection of works by Leon Kruckowski and a novel by Igor Newerly—*The Diary of a Cellulose Factory Worker*. *Citizens*, a novel by Kazimierz Brandys, is also to be published.

Novels by writers of the German Democratic Republic are to be published soon. They include *The Grandsons* by Willi Bredel and *Goldsborough* by Stefan Heym.

Russian translations of works by Chinese writers will also appear. These include *Children of the Huaihe River*, a novel by Chen Teng-ke, and a collection of works of Liu Pai-yu, consisting of a short novel, stories and essays.

Italian fiction to be published in 1955 includes *Cursed Land* by F. Jovine, *The Brigand* by Giuseppe Berto, and Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped in Eboli*. In the preparatory stage are works by French writers including *Monsieur Duval's Nephew* by Louis Aragon, the collection of short stories by Elsa Triolet and Georges Sadoul's monograph on Charlie Chaplin.

This year's plan envisages the publication of short stories by Prem Chand, an Indian classic, and a collection of stories from the Arabic.

There will be published *Klitgaard and Sons*, a novel by the Danish writer Hans Kirk which is a sequel to his *Devil's Money*, published in Moscow in 1953.

The list of English novels to be published in translation include *Betrayed Spring* by Jack Lindsay and *Let the Day Perish* by G. Gordon. Novels by American writers include *Silas Timberman* by Howard Fast and *The Second Oldest Profession* by Robert Sylvester. A collection of short stories by Langston Hughes, a Negro writer, will come off the press in 1955; a novel on Goya by Lion Feuchtwanger of Germany, will also be published this year.



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YELENA KATERLI

The Long Road

Chapter Seven

1

ONE evening Stepan Stoletov and his wife Varya went for a stroll before going to bed. They did not get far, however. As they passed the block of flats where Kovalev lived, Stoletov noticed a light burning in his flat and suggested to Varya that they should call on him.

"Isn't it a bit late?" said Varya. "He may've gone to bed."

"I don't think so. Look, the light's on."

Stoletov turned out to be right. Kovalev opened the door almost before the bell had stopped ringing. He stood on the threshold and made no move to invite his callers in. They might have been strangers to him, so unfriendly was his expression. Stoletov, however, gave no signs of noticing anything odd in the other's manner, stepped forward and drew Varya with him.

"We saw your light burning," he said. "So we decided to drop in."

For a moment Kovalev hesitated. Then he flung open a door which led not into his study but into another room. He switched on the light; the glare of the unshaded bulb revealed a round dining-table, a sideboard with glass-fronted and quite empty cupboards, uncurtained windows and a piano with a dusty top.

The first part of *The Long Road* appeared in the previous issue.

The room had a chilly, musty air; Kovalev opened a French window on to a balcony; the warm, scented night flowed in.

"It's a long time since I used this room," he said with a rueful smile. "I'm sorry, it looks a bit desolate...."

He waved his visitors to chairs and left the room. Varya wiped the dust from a chair with her handkerchief and looked around. She was somewhat put out.

"I don't like this place, Stepan," she whispered. "Let's go home, please."

But Stoletov only smiled, and began pacing up and down the room. He had decided he would not let Kovalev's churlishness drive him away. Why, though, were they being kept out of the study? And where on earth had the man got to?

The door opened and Kovalev came in. He was carrying a large tray with cups, a box of chocolates and a plate of biscuits on it.

He put the tray on a chair, flung a cloth over the table, laid the cups on it and opened the box of chocolates which he pushed towards Varya.

"Sit down, Stepan Demyanovich," he said. "The kettle will be on the boil in a moment. We'll have tea."

Varya peeped into the box with childlike curiosity. It was full of prettily wrapped sweets and miniature liqueur bottles covered with silver paper.

"Here's one for you," said Stoletov, indicating a chocolate in the shape of a tiny fiddle; but Varya stood up, opened the piano and ran her fingers up and down the keyboard. The piano was of excellent tone, a little muffled perhaps, but that may have been because the lid was down.

As she played, Varya heard her husband talking, and she glanced over her shoulder.

"I shall send him a telegram before the end of this week," he was saying. "You may have given in but I'm damned if I'm going to."

Stoletov caught Varya's eye and signed to her to go on playing.

"I've been fed up with the whole thing for a long time," said Kovalev. "I don't know all the facts but I've a feeling there's something fishy going on that's holding things up. I'm not prepared to go on fighting with shadows. What's the sense in the factory paper writing about something the factory itself can't settle, even if it wanted to."

Varya stopped listening. She struck a loud chord and broke into a waltz—a gay, tripping, carefree melody. Little bells seemed to tinkle as her right hand ran up the keyboard. And only then did she realize how dull and empty life was for her without a piano. She was accustomed to sitting for hours on end at one.

"Bureaucrats aren't immovable obstacles," Varya heard her husband say. "It won't take real people long to clear the way—you'll see."

"I've lost too much in life on account of that 'sand shrew' of mine, I tell you. I don't intend to be a slave to it any longer. Let's go into the other room. I've a few papers to show you. They'll give you some idea of the way the thing came into existence."

Stepping carefully so as not to disturb Varya, they went into Kovalev's study. Kovalev opened a drawer in his desk and took out a large faded photograph.

"There I am with my first excavator. Some newsreel operators took the picture. They made me a present of it. Good fellows they were, too. I'm friendly with one of them up to this day."

The photograph showed a young man holding a spade, well to the foreground. He was standing on a high mound of sand. The wind played with his hair, the sun lit up his happy, smiling face. In the background yawned the foundation pit of a building site. On the bottom of this large oval saucer and on plank gangways along its sides hundreds of wheelbarrows were being pushed; the navvies, each with a spade in his hand, worked shoulder to shoulder; at the far end of the pit a small mechanical shovel lifted its short jib.

"That's where my working days began, Stepan Demyanovich."

Many years had passed since that photograph was taken, but Kovalev had not forgotten working beside his fellow-navvies in that pit, shovelling the sifting yellow sand. They thought they were working fast. Every movement was carefully calculated, the spades were chosen with particular care—and how they used to argue about those spades, the one and only implement for digging, it seemed to them!

Kovalev, like everyone else, had his favourite spade. He used to bring it with him from work and keep it under his bunk in the hostel so that no one else would get hold of it. But his affection for his spade was short-lived—it died on the day when, having some time off, he walked across to the other side of the pit where a puzzling object like a girder on a railway-bridge rose above the pit. He glanced at this object with no particular interest. Then he saw it move and bend over the pit. It hung motionless for a few moments, then raised itself and swung to one side, carrying with it a large scoop from which a thin stream of sand trickled. Then the scoop opened like a bird's claw and released a barrow-load of sand into the back of a lorry which was standing beside it. The jib moved to and fro a few more times and the lorry moved off fully laden, making way for another. And again the scoop flashed its steel fangs, made a rattling sound and dropped into the pit for another load.

Kovalev was spellbound by this powerful piece of machinery which was able in one operation to shift a whole barrow-load of earth. At the controls sat a nondescript-looking man in blue overalls. He moved something and the scoop dropped smoothly into the pit, dug steadily into the sand and, as the jib swung, slowly returned with its load to the lorry.

Kovalev remained standing beside the machine until the end of the shift. He learned from a lorry-driver who was awaiting his turn that the scoop could take almost a cubic metre of earth at a time and that if more such machines were available, the excavation work would have been finished long ago.

"You'll not shift that earth with spades before the hay comes home," said the lorry-driver. "Like a lot of beetles digging, you are."

"But why is there only one machine working here? They ought to be here by the dozen."

"So *you* think! Where d'you think they come from? That's a foreign make. Paid for in foreign currency. It's called a 'Marion.' But there's plenty of fellows like you. Look at 'em all dashing about over there. And if needs be as many more will come." The man's tone was churlish. He drove his lorry forward to take his place under the scoop.

Kovalev sat down on the warm sand and went on watching the excavator. But soon afterwards it broke down; there was a harsh grating sound, the jib faltered, then stopped half-way. The operator clambered down from his cabin and started repairing the machine. He tinkered with the engine for a long time, then, pulling his cap down hard, went away.

Kovalev expected to see mechanics come dashing up at once to get the mighty "Marion" back on the job. But no one came and the machine stood useless for the rest of the shift. Kovalev was shocked.

From that day the young navy kept a jealous eye on the work of the excavator. It stood idle for long periods; this, the operator explained, was because the machine had a work norm which was written in its "passport"; according to this norm it had the right to stand idle and, this being so, the supervisor did not worry about it and made no effort to get it repaired quickly when it broke down.

"Works for an hour and then knocks off for three. She's a finicky old girl. She doesn't like to work too hard. . . Gets all kinds of favours from the supervisor."

Those "favours" were extended to "Marion's" operator too. When the machine broke down for a long spell, he would calmly go off home or take a boat out on the broad placid river.

One evening, when Kovalev was sitting on the porch at the hostel, he saw this operator beckoning to him from the road.

"Doing anything, Kovalev? What d'you say to a row?"

Near the ferry landing-stage the excavator-operator went up to a slim, lightly-built wherry with a bored young man in a new saffron shirt sitting at the oars.

"Let's go," said the operator as he stepped into the boat.

"Where to?" the boatman asked as he cast off. "'Cross to the other side or for a trip?"

"Let's go for a trip. It's a grand evening. Just right to take the girls out."

The boat glided along close to the bank. The trees bent low at that place and below them the water looked quite black. A damp, grassy scent came from the bank; somewhere a night-jar uttered a long drawn-out cry; mossy old tree-stumps thrust their weird shapes out over the river; the broad leaves of water-lilies rustled against the sides of the boat.

Kovalev dipped his hand into the inky water, grasped a cold white flower and plucked it, bringing up with it a long flexible stalk.

"A water-lily," said the excavator-operator. "I don't know a lovelier flower."

He snatched off his cap. There was a gleam of inspiration in his eyes. He looked Kovalev straight in the face.

"Man was created for beauty, you know, Kovalev. Look at that flower. It exists for man. Admire it, give it to your sweetheart, keep it in your room. Now, song, too—that's also something to make life more beautiful."

And thereupon he sang in an unexpectedly high, resonant voice:

*Down in the valley
On a smooth little mound
An old oak tree
Casts its branches around. . .*

The sun was rising when they got back to the building site. Dense clouds of moths hung over the water, they fell to the ground, were crunched underfoot. Their life was brief—a few hours in all.

"Now, man's given a long time to live," said the excavator-operator, removing a grey moth from his boot; its wings were still fluttering. "And it's up to man to take as much as he can from life—yes, and give something to others, too. Take you, for instance. You're strong and healthy. You've a long life ahead of you. See that you make it a fine one. But who's going to help you do that? No one."

"What about you?"

"No, I'm not. I'm a man of whims. I live as my fancy moves me. Today I like you, tomorrow I won't be able to stand the sight of you. One day I work like fury, the next I drop everything and go off to another job. So don't count on me. Use your own wits. There's one thing I can do for you, though. Would you like to work as my mate? I'll teach you everything. You're one that ought to be taught. You love machines. What d'you say?"

"I'm game. I'll be grateful to you all my life."

"Grateful? What for? I've taken a fancy to you. You've got happy-looking eyes and you're high-spirited. Nothing'll come out of the mate I've got now. He's got a sour nature and shows it, too. I'll have a word with the supervisor tomorrow. Then it'll be up to you whether you make a man out of yourself or stay being a worm. I believe in you; you're not the sort to let a fellow down. One day, maybe, you'll spare a kind thought for me. And if you don't, well, I don't care. I'm not doing this for your gratitude, I'm doing it to please my fancy."

Arseni Mikhailovich Kovalev, one-time navvy, paced his study with even strides. It was growing light outside. Stoletov sat near the desk. From the next room came the strains of music.

"That man kept his word," Kovalev went on, "I became his mate. Then I took over the excavator myself. Two years later the Comsomol recommended me for study at a workers' evening school. It nearly made me cry to part with my machine. I was quite in love with it, almost as if it were a living creature. You see, it had given me strength and power. When I left I promised the boys I would go on learning until I knew how to build machines like that. I wanted there to be a lot of them. I wanted to see them used on every building job, replacing manual labour on the heaviest work."

In the light of early dawn Kovalev looked almost youthful; his hair was not so much grey as bleached by the sun. His voice rang with excitement. He strode to the desk and pulled out another photograph: it showed a group of young men standing around an excavator, among them Kovalev. He looked more grown-up than in the first picture; this time he was wearing dark overalls instead of the embroidered shirt. His hand rested on the rail of the operator's cab. All the young men looked very serious. It was a farewell gathering photographed at the hour of Kovalev's departure.

"That was our Comsomol secretary," Kovalev said, touching the picture. "And this lad was my mate. The rest were the navvies I started with. I promised them to study so they'd each have a machine to handle instead of a spade. Maybe that childish pledge sounds funny, but for many a year it

was my guiding star. And in trying to fulfil it I've sacrificed a great deal . . . including my personal happiness."

He tossed the photograph back on to the desk, went to the window and lighted his pipe. A cloud of tobacco smoke drifted over his shoulder into the room.

Stoletov looked at the photographs—at the one of the young man with a spade, then at the same young man with the excavator against a background of metal framework rising on the building site, then his glance strayed to the photograph in the frame which he had seen before. The photograph showed a woman with a girl beside her. The withered leaf had been removed so that both faces could be seen now and the frame stood in the middle of the desk.

"If a man can preserve the romanticism of his youth until his hair turns grey, it becomes something sacred," said Stoletov, moving the photographs aside. "You must keep that romanticism, Arseni Mikhailovich. Keep it and fight for it. Wait just a little longer, we'll see that 'shrew' of yours yet."

Kovalev shrugged. Wait? Yes, he could wait. He could put his blue prints away somewhere safe. But he could not fight. He had no more strength for that. He had given notice that he intended to take his holidays, and very soon he would be going away for a month. He had not yet made up his mind where to go. Anywhere a long way off would suit him.

Varya came to the door. She looked pale and tired.

"I'm sorry, I drove you out with my playing," she said.

As if guarding some other person's secret, Stoletov laid a sheet of drawing-paper over the photographs. Then he walked up to Varya.

"You played very nicely, dear," he said. "Now let's go home and let Comrade Kovalev get some sleep."

When he had seen his visitors off, Kovalev returned to his study and drew an unfinished letter out of a drawer. He moved his papers aside and placed the letter in front of him to add a few lines:

"I shall wait for you there all month. Come, and bring Tatyana. Let us try to rebuild our life together. I have waited so long—surely my hopes will not be disappointed this time. I have gained control of myself, I shall do just as you wish, but I cannot go on living without you and Tatyana. I send you my kisses, my beloved. Your Arseni."

He closed the envelope, and, as if afraid he might have second thoughts, went out at once and posted his letter.

2

Andrei was extremely interested to learn what impression had been made by the letters from the oil workers and the designers published in *Tribuna*. He went to the workshops early that morning, only to find everybody busy with his own affairs, and copies of the paper lying about unfolded and obviously unread.

In one shop he ran across Vanya Poperechny. Vanya, too, was trying to find out the reaction to the letter though he pretended to be deep in conversation with some high-speed turners about their methods. Andrei walked past him, frowning. He did not want Vanya to notice his disappointment.

Andrei returned to his office in a bad humour. On the bench sat a young man with a white bandage round his neck and a patch of pink plaster on one cheek. He clutched a sheet of paper on which something was written in pencil.

"I'm off work today. Not feeling well," the man said hoarsely. "I read the paper at the polyclinic. Here's my reply to the oil workers. Please print it in the paper."

He handed Andrei his message. It said that the writer pledged himself to double his daily quota of work so that the oil workers could get new houses quickly. The grammar was rather shaky. The language, however, was quite high-flown.

"Deeply conscious of the profound importance to the state of what you are doing and of your appeal to our youth . . . never having seen an oil gusher but realizing its deep significance, I give my oath and pledge to raise the banner of labour to its full height. . . ."

"Needs tidying up a bit," said Andrei brightly, looking at the young man who was sprawling on the bench. "Should be shorter, more concrete. Where d'you work?"

"In the chief mechanic's department," the reply came grudgingly. "Repairing machine-tools. What do you mean, more concrete? Two hundred per cent—look, there it is."

"But are you sure the machines you'll be repairing are working on that oil job?"

"We work where we're sent. It's our job to do the repairs in time. What the machines are working on isn't our business."

The man spoke with a sneer: here's a chap sitting in an office and doesn't understand a thing. Nagging away about silly little things—where do you work, how do you work? As if that's what mattered. The main thing was the two hundred per cent. That was the stuff. Let all the boys in the shop read that, specially the foreman. The foreman would go off the deep end when he read that in the newspaper. He was always swearing and cursing and then—whang! There would be this pledge in the paper.

But Andrei went on asking him questions. How was his work up to now? What machine-tools had he repaired? When did he leave trade school? What was the matter with his neck?

"Oh, that's nothing," the fellow growled in answer to the last question. "Got a boil, so I had a bandage put on."

"Is that a boil on your cheek, too?"

"No, I got hurt."

"D'you belong to the Comsomol?"

"Why, d'you have to be in the Comsomol to write in the paper, or what?"

Andrei was finding the fellow less and less to his liking; sprawling there, with his cap on, his face all swollen. So insolent too. Got off work for a mere boil on the neck. He'd obviously been in a scrap—there was an ugly bruise under the eye close to the pink plaster. All the same, Andrei felt reluctant to reject the first response to the oil workers' letter.

"Listen," he said, putting the note aside, "come to see me tomorrow evening. We'll see what other replies we get and then decide which ones to print; the rest we'll use some other way. Oh yes, one thing more. Do

you think we could organize a special young workers' team in the chief mechanic's department? Maybe you could add that idea to your letter?"

"That's for the foreman to say. What's the good of thinking about it? Our job's to work, not to think. Don't you know the saying? There was once a cock that thought and thought and thought and then it croaked."

Without another word the young man left the office. Andrei noticed the way Valya glared at him as he went out.

"Know him?" Andrei asked her.

"I certainly do. Too well," said Valya. "If I'd had my way I'd never have let him see you, but how are you to turn a fellow with his nerve away? He's lazy, he's a disgrace to the whole shop, and, what's more, he's a rowdy, too...."

Valya noisily snatched a sheet of paper out of her typewriter: she had made mistakes in the article she had been typing when that fellow was in the office. Now she would have to retype it. Did Andrei really mean to accept that letter? Nothing in the world would make her defile her typewriter by copying out those lies. Doubling his quota, indeed! A fellow who never reached his quota as it was....

Andrei slipped the letter into his pocket. So the first reaction to the oil workers' appeal was unacceptable. Never mind, he would wait; perhaps decent people, too, would notice the letter from Bashkiria. But there was no further response, although, when Andrei met Lyuba, she assured him that the newspaper had given rise to some talk in the shops. Lyuba suggested they should "organize" a response by talking to people and making a note of their opinions. Andrei, however, declared that he would not do that sort of thing again—let people learn to write for themselves.

Lyuba decided to lose no more time; she would have the letter discussed by the Comsomol activists. She at once set out round the shops, inviting all who wished to come and join in a discussion. The invitation was quite straightforward but accompanying it was the vague promise that there would be something interesting after the meeting—a new picture or a concert.

"But there's not going to be a concert," Stoletov protested. He had overheard Lyuba exercising her powers of persuasion on an assembly worker from the chief mechanic's department. "Why are you fooling people?"

"Maybe we shall have a concert, maybe we shan't," Lyuba replied enigmatically. "Unless I promise them something, nobody'll turn up except members of the committee."

Whether it was Lyuba's powers of persuasion or the hope of seeing a new picture that brought people, but the meeting was well attended. A crowd gathered in the corner of the factory yard generally used as a volley-ball court. A table and some chairs were brought for the chairman and the platform party; the others had to sit on the ground.

Both the factory manager and Stoletov were there. They arrived with a few more of the "old brigade" such as Syurtukov, Yelena Protasova and Poteryayev the pattern-maker. These older people sat a little apart on a garden bench and here, after a little hesitation, Andrei joined them.



"We were grubbing up tree roots just here when we came across some gold-prospecting tools," the factory manager said. "They were all rusty and corroded by age. What those prospectors could have been looking for here, or what they found, no one knows. There were some geologists working with us then and they said there was absolutely nothing here to look for."

"Geologists!" said Syurtukov. "Those old gold prospectors didn't have geologists to help them. They worked haphazardly, by observation. My father did a bit of prospecting in his time. He always dreamed of finding an emerald as big as a cat's eye or a nugget as big as two fists. But there wasn't much to be found—only one in a thousand made his fortune."

"I had a stroke of luck once," said Poteryayev. "Found a Siberian ruby. A big one, too. Got what was a lot of money in those times for it. Didn't last long, though. I went to town and soon drank it up. I was young then, of course, different from what I am now."

"And I'm no different, praise the Lord," said Syurtukov. "The girls've still got an eye for me—Dusya's friends—though I'm a grandfather."

"H'm, I bet the girls had more than an eye for you forty years ago," laughed Budanov. "Well, you've still got a twinkle in your eye. What a man! All the same, you've got one old man's habit—you like to talk about the past."

"It isn't a habit, it's a pedagogical method. See what I was—see what I am. Get what I mean? Nowadays our smart youngsters start criticizing everything as soon as they see God's light. There's nothing you don't hear them asking for—asphalt pavements in the village streets, fountains in the park, brighter street lighting. Too dark for them to go walking-out by, mark you! 'Fraid of mixing the girls up. They're not even interested to know that the forest covered these parts ten years ago."

"He's right, this was virgin forest then," said the factory manager. "My boy was keen on photography in those days and he took pictures of beauty spots and our first houses and workshops. It's interesting to look at them now..."

He broke off, not telling them that after his son's death he had gone on taking photographs himself to complete the album, with pictures of each new shop and house carefully pasted in with the date.

The hand-bell was being rung. Lyuba Zvonaryeva was summoning everybody to the meeting from her high perch on a tree-stump. The public, mostly Comsomol members, sat round about on the dusty, trampled grass. Everybody was laughing and talking loudly; Andrei was afraid the meeting was going to turn out badly—it looked more like a party than a serious gathering.

"Let's go and sit on the grass, too," Syurtukov suggested. "Nearer to the masses."

He winked at the factory manager but Budanov kept to his seat on the bench a little apart. Stoletov, however, moved to the grass. Andrei went and sat beside him and looked round for Nikolai. He saw him standing next to Dusya. Dusya was wearing a smart frilly frock. She was looking at Nikolai archly as she spoke to him.

But where was Dusya's husband? Ah, there he was at the chairman's table, with Valya sitting next to him with paper and ink-pot before her.

Lyuba opened the meeting. "We're not going to have a report. I'll say just a few words and then we'll open the discussion. There's one thing seriously wrong about the way we work. The trouble is we don't know who we're working for. A chap makes something but he doesn't know who or what he's making it for. Of course, I agree that we ought to work conscientiously on every order, whatever it is. But all the same we must know who we're working for. Other factories do. They know when they're working for some big construction scheme, for one of the People's Democracies, for China, for Moscow. After all, an order's not just an order, there's a political side to it; it has something in it to inspire us in our work. But that, I'm sorry to say, is not the way with us. Only our designers and, of course, the factory manager, know where the stuff we're making goes to. We in the factory are kept in complete ignorance about it."

Shouts arose from all over the gathering.

"Part number seventeen," someone shouted. "Guess what it is!"

"Like a crossword puzzle. Work it out for yourself. Solution in the next issue."

"No, there's no solution. Your guess is as good as any other."

Lyuba clanged the bell.

"Quiet, please. Everyone will have a chance to speak later. Don't interrupt."

"Take my name. I want to speak."

"So do I. Let me speak first. I've got to get away."

The hubbub grew. Lyuba flung her hands up in protest.

"Quiet," she cried. "Send your names up, but don't yell. Where's your sense of discipline? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. In front of older comrades, too."

But the "older comrades" were not at all put out by the din. Stoletov was shouting himself. Syurtukov laughed. The factory manager was the only one who kept his dignity. He looked somewhat disgruntled.

"Well, to proceed," said Lyuba when order had been restored. "That's how it is: we want to know who we're working for, where the production of the different shops is going and what it's to be used for. The manage-

ment ought to keep us informed about such matters. . . . The work will be more interesting for us then. Now, let's have a look at this letter from the oil workers. I went through the shops today to find out what the present position is. I'm going to tell you about that now. Then we'll discuss what can be done to get a move on with that order and we'll send a reply to the letter from the factory youth."

Lyuba had a voice that carried well; and what extraneous sounds there were did not lessen its effect. A keen ear could have picked up many such sounds, however. A lorry drove up to the factory gates and hooted insistently to be let in. The gates opened with a shrill squeal—how on earth could the gate-keepers stand it? Why didn't they oil the hinges? Swifts darted with a swoosh over Lyuba's head. Large flocks of them described circles against the pale sky as they chased gnats. The local goods-train uttered its thin cuckoo-calls as it dragged its wagon-loads of bricks to the site of the new apartment house.

Every time the locomotive whistled, Andrei looked round in vexation. What did it think it was doing, interrupting Lyuba like that? But Lyuba went on addressing the meeting, paying no attention whatsoever to the interruptions. And everybody who sat round her on the grass or on the benches listened to Lyuba and not to the railway engine or to the monotonous whine of an accordion repeating a single phrase again and again somewhere near by, or to the announcer's voice booming from a loud-speaker on the roof of the management offices.

"Now I want to hear what you think about the questions I've raised," Lyuba concluded. "Let me have your suggestions; we'll write them down for the resolution."

Lyuba jumped down from her perch and stood near the chairman's place. The setting sun played on her hair, on her animated face, on her shining eyes.

How lovely she is, thought Andrei. And she doesn't realize it, doesn't notice how everyone admires her. . . .

"I have a suggestion to make," said Vladimir Nazarenko, jumping on to the tree-stump that served as the rostrum.

Nazarenko was wearing an embroidered shirt. His blue jacket hung loosely over one shoulder. In his hand he held a thin switch stripped of its bark with a single green leaf at the tip.

"You laughed when we shouted that we weren't given jobs but cross-words to do," he began, hiding the switch behind his back. "But it really is important. For instance, I never knew that I was working on that order for the oil workers, nor did any of our chaps. I asked about it but nobody could say anything definite. If they'd known, of course they'd have done their best. I know I'm a member of the Comsomol committee and that means I'm responsible, but there are some older than me. Take the chairman of the factory trade-union committee over there. He's supposed to run Socialist emulation. But what does he do about it? He organizes a competition for the best pattern-maker or the best fitter, which only panders to personal vanity, but when it comes to trying to make people have a conscientious attitude to the work they're doing, it's not his business, apparently."

"What's wrong with you is you're sore you didn't get among the best turners," someone shouted.

"I'm not at all sore about it. There are people older than me who

work harder and deserve more. What makes me sore is the senseless way emulation is organized. Like a football match—all the cheers for the one who scores a goal.”

Nazarenko looked to see what he could do with his switch and laid it on the table right on top of the minutes book in which Valya was writing. Valya swept it angrily to the ground. There it was pounced on by some young lads. Nazarenko, meanwhile, stole a guilty look at Valya and drew a letter from his pocket.

“This is a letter I got from a friend,” he said. “He wrote from Ural-mash¹ and that means something. We were at trade school together and then he asked to be sent to Uralmash. My friend’s a Comsomol organizer. He’s giving us the benefit of his experience. Listen to this: ‘Our works have received an order for China. A Chinese representative visited us; he asked us to do the job fast and well. We Comsomol members have got people in every workshop and section seeing there are no bottle-necks. We keep our eyes open for rationalization proposals and see that they’re acted on. We got so many proposals that we even had to appoint someone in the designing office and in the chief technologist’s department to see that they were followed up. That order will be ready before delivery date and the quality of work will be first-rate. When you have time, come and see me. I’ll arrange for you to get into the works and I’ll show you everything. You can stay with me. . . .’”

While reading the letter, Nazarenko looked up several times to see whether people were listening. He could not make out at first whether they all were, but he saw that Stoletov was: his face was attentive and expressed approval. The factory manager, too, was listening. Was he interested? Hard to tell from his expression, but maybe he was. The chairman of the trade-union committee had turned his back. That didn’t matter. There ought to be an all-Union competition of chairmen of factory trade-union committees, and he ought to be made to compete.

“That’s what people are doing in other factories,” Nazarenko went on, putting the letter back into his pocket. “And what are we doing? Crossword puzzles and acrostics! We don’t pay enough attention to the order and, as a result, some people lose heart. Take our own section. Yesterday only three lathes were working. It was the same today. Why? Because those lathes are out of order, their wiring system needs overhauling. Our new foreman, Comrade Zhukov, doesn’t press hard enough. He asks politely for repairmen to be sent and they don’t come. I said to him: ‘At our place you’ve got to go for the repairers tooth and nail. If you’re polite with them you’ll wait two years.’ He told me he couldn’t do things that way. He’ll learn, of course. But in the meantime we need one of our Comsomol members to keep an eye on the chief mechanic’s department. I bet you we’d have got our repair men if we’d had the Comsomol on the job.”

“All the repair men are busy fitting up the new shop,” Syurtukov shouted, unable to contain himself. “Breakdown jobs aren’t in their plan of work. They have to sneak away as if they were doing it on the sly.”

“That’s just what I mean,” Nazarenko broke in. “Please put it down in the resolution. Then we’ll complete the oil workers’ order ahead of delivery date, and be proud to do it.”

¹ Urals Machine-Building Works.

Jumping down from the tree-stump, Nazarenko recovered his switch from the boy who had picked it up and sat down on the ground beside him. His speech had left him excited; he nudged his neighbour in the ribs, almost upset the chairman's table, and waved his switch at non-existent mosquitoes.

"Quiet, Nazarenko," said Lyuba sternly. "You weren't interrupted. Let others speak."

A foreman from the chief mechanic's department was speaking; he was a lanky, fair-haired man with a pale bored-looking face. He spoke in a dull, toneless voice, using stereotyped phrases.

"The complaint about unfulfilled repair work is quite unjustified," he drawled. "According to existing regulations the workshops should hand in written applications at the scheduled time for the repair work they need done."

"But our lathes don't break down 'at the scheduled time,'" Nazarenko shouted. "Don't you understand that?"

"Then the question is one of an unforeseen breakdown and, in that case, repair work may be delayed for an unspecified length of time. Applications must be made at the scheduled time for repair work and then...."

The man's voice floundered in a rising tide of noises. Some people coughed, others changed their places, others started talking to their neighbours. Even Stoletov bent his head to one side to listen to what Syurtukov was telling him—it must have been something amusing, for a smile played over Stoletov's lips.

Lyuba tapped the edge of the table with her pencil, she called for order, she even rang her bell, but the noise grew. No one was listening to the speaker, no one heckled him—his remarks aroused neither approval nor opposition.

"Your time's up," called Vanya Poperechny. "Are you going to stop or not?"

With much noisy argument a ruling on the length of speeches was given. Just then, however, the loud strains of an accordion were heard coming from somewhere near by. The music crashed out suddenly. Three young men appeared on the path. Yasha Milovidov was in the middle and it was he who was playing the accordion. His companions looked about them with truculent, arrogant expressions on their faces. They ignored the meeting, pretending they had not noticed it and were quite blind to their surroundings.

"Get the hell out of here or we'll throw you out," someone shouted at the intruders.

"Send for the fire brigade. They need the hose on them."

The next speaker climbed the tree-stump and stood waiting to start. Then he climbed down again sheepishly. Lyuba rang her bell but it sounded faint amidst the hubbub of voices and the strains of the accordion. Yasha went on playing, extracting the maximum volume of sound out of his instrument, while one of his companions sang a jingle at the top of his voice.

*When I took my accordion into battle,
The enemy fell down dead.
Toot-toot I'd play; trrt-trrt I'd rattle,
'Twas like a biff on the head.*

That voice was as piercing as a tin trumpet and every word reached the meeting. Someone found it amusing and laughed, but several others made a sudden rush for the path. Among them, Andrei noticed, was Nazarenko.

"Oh, they'll fight," shrieked Valya, scattering the sheets of paper on which she was keeping the minutes. "Look out, Yasha's carrying a knife, I know he is."

"Quiet, now," whispered Lyuba. "Don't start a panic."

Lyuba felt frightened herself, though she did not betray her feelings and did not even look towards the path.

"We'll carry on," she called during a brief lull in the shouting. "Who's next, comrades?"

The meeting proceeded. Syurtukov walked slowly to the chairman's table, brushed aside the young man who still stood undecidedly near the rostrum, and began to speak in a calm quiet voice:

"I don't think that the question before us today requires much special examination. Today we have to decide the principle of the thing: are we going to do what the oil workers have asked for or not? I think we can do it. . . . Not only can, but must do it. There's some time to be saved on that order, that's certain. We ought to ask the factory manager to draw up a revised production schedule. For every shop and section. Then everything will be all right."

"Of course there ought to be a new schedule, but we've a few complaints and suggestions to make. May I speak, please?" It was Lepikhin calling from the back of the meeting.

Dusya spoke after Lepikhin, and Budanov after her. The meeting went on normally. Valya, however, kept looking round nervously, peering at the shrubs to see what was happening on the path. But she could make nothing out: Yasha and his companions had been driven from the path down the slope. Muffled voices were heard, a few shrill notes on the accordion, and then silence, followed by a shriek and the sound of heavy footsteps on the dry earth as someone ran away.

They're fighting, Valya thought sadly. Whose was that shriek? Could it have been her Vladimir's? It didn't sound like him, or Yasha, for that matter.

Then, to her joy, she noticed Andrei and Vanya Poperechny get up quietly and slip away in the direction of the shouting.

Yasha and his pals would bolt now. Yasha would be afraid the editor would write about him in the paper. . . .

"Why aren't you keeping the minutes?" Lyuba asked her. "We're going to draw up a resolution on the basis of the minutes, you know. You've missed everything Dusya said."

"I'm sorry, Lyuba, don't be angry with me. I'll ask Dusya to tell me all she said. I'm worried about Vladimir."

She looked down and read the last note she had taken: "Lepikhin proposed that the experience of leading workers should be made more widely known. . . . Innovators' methods to be improved with something new every day. . . . Experience to be passed on efficiently. . . . A trip to Uralmash to study. . . ."

To study what? Valya's notes came to an end at that point; she had forgotten what Lepikhin had said. Was it something about mechanizing the moulding. Or was it something else? After a little reflection Valya

wrote "... the work of the best innovators." After all, what else could one learn from Uralmash?

A small committee was elected to collate the suggestions. Stoletov, in proposing Andrei, said:

"We ought to have the editor on it. And see that the paper gives us regular news about how work is proceeding on the oil workers' order in each shop."

Andrei got back to the meeting just in time to hear this remark. His hair was ruffled, his shirt collar undone, there were buttons missing from his jacket. As he hurried to his place he wiped his face with a handkerchief. Hearing Stoletov's words, he stopped behind the last row of the people sitting on the ground.

What chance had he of being elected? He was still quite an unknown quantity.

But he got on to the committee. The list of candidates was elected *en bloc*. Lepikhin was at once elected chairman and a motion was carried that the committee report to the Comsomol committee on the following day.

3

"Will members of our committee please not disperse," said Lepikhin in a loud voice. "Let's go over to my place. It's quiet there: we won't be disturbed and there'll be tea."

They all walked down the slope, crossed the stream and climbed up the other side towards a white building that lay among the pine trees. Darkness was falling and lights were going on in many windows. One light glimmered behind the tree trunks at the very top of the hill. That was where the Lepikhins lived.

"That's my eyrie," Lepikhin said to Andrei, pointing ahead. "And the missus is at home. That means tea. I had my eye on that place a long time before we moved in. I like it there—you get a good view all around."

They found Lepikhin's wife Maria sitting near the window with her chin in her hand, a thoughtful look on her face. She still wore her white doctor's cap over her dark curly hair. She did not hear the visitors arrive.

The room bore a faint resemblance to a hospital ward—perhaps because of the snow-white counterpanes on the beds, or because of the glossy white paint of the cupboards and shelves, perhaps because of the collection of glistening glass retorts on a dressing-table with a mirror. A shiny electric kettle bubbled like a sterilizer in an operating theatre. On the table the cups and the bread dish were covered by a starched napkin.

"Let's have a second kettle on," Lepikhin said to his wife. "There are a lot of us and we all want tea."

Maria cast a penetrating glance at each of them, shook hands and left the room. Her curt manner embarrassed the visitors slightly but Lepikhin remained as bright and talkative as ever. As he drew white stools up to the table ("We've no chairs. Haven't bought 'em yet"), he carefully turned over the edges of the white table-cloth ("So we shan't spill ink on it. Haven't bought a writing desk yet"); he pulled his notebook out of his pocket ("I made a note of all the suggestions. You can't rely on Valya's minutes").

But before he had time to open the notebook, Maria returned and placed a big mug of milk in front of him.

"Drink up your milk first," she said. "You forgot it again. I left the bottle in the larder. . . . Tea'll be ready for all of you in a minute. I've got another kettle on in the kitchen."

She returned to the window, called Lyuba Zvonaryeva over and whispered to her. Andrei strained his ears in vain to hear what she was saying. Lyuba spoke in a whisper too; when both women came to the table their faces were equally tense and secretive.

"Hello, what's up?" asked Lepikhin. "Are you all right?"

His voice expressed concern and alarm. But Maria only smiled and the smile gave her stern features an unexpectedly gentle expression. She was all right, she said. What had happened concerned somebody else. Who? What? Ah, those were doctor's secrets.

Besides Andrei, Lyuba and Lepikhin there were two others on the committee—Dusya Syurtukova and a tall young man whom Andrei had not met before—a filter from Shop No. 11. He, like Andrei, was visiting the Lepikhins for the first time and felt a little ill-at-ease. Not like Dusya, who, on arrival, had given Maria a peck on the cheek and passed on a greeting from her mother and little son, both patients of Maria's.

When Maria had satisfied herself that her husband had drained his mug of milk, she brought in the kettle, poured everyone a glass of strong tea. She sliced a loaf and brought butter and jam. Then she went back to her seat at the window.

"I'm a poor hostess," she said. "Help yourselves. If there isn't enough I'll bring some more. Drink your tea and eat up and don't pay any attention to me."

From her seat near the window she cast occasional glances at her husband. Andrei noticed how she partly closed the window when the cool evening breeze stirred the hair on Lepikhin's brow; he noticed too, how she got up to throw a jacket over his shoulders and the concern with which she studied his drawn, weary face.

Lepikhin thumbed through his notebook, turning down corners of the pages by some system known only to himself. He had made notes of all the most interesting suggestions and added his own views.

"I'll start by reading the suggestions according to the shops they came from," he said, gathering his notes together. "Then we'll get down to business."

He read out everything, not overlooking the smallest detail—a long list of names of machines, operations, workers and engineers. He had taken Budanov down almost verbatim. Among other things, the manager had promised to see that castings came in regularly for machining.

"Why, they're like shorthand minutes," chortled Dusya. "We had stenographers at the regional conference of the Comsomol last year. They wrote down all the speeches. Then they let me read what I'd said. My, I was surprised. Had I really talked in such a silly way? 'You see, comrades,' you see, comrades' after nearly every word. They'd written it all down."

The suggestions concerning work on the oil workers' order were soon collated and written down. Andrei was still at work on the preamble when Lepikhin was putting a full stop to the last paragraph of the resolution.

Lyuba gathered up the scribbled sheets and stuffed them in her bag—they would be typed by dinner break the next day.

"That's fine," she said. "We've got through it quickly and worked in all the details. It'll give us a plan of action with some guts in it."

"It's a very crude plan and there's nothing new in it," objected Lepikhin. "We've talked about practically all those things a hundred times already. Actually, they're the things that should be done whatever order we're working on."

Andrei stopped writing the preamble and listened to Lepikhin attentively. He liked this lean man with the quick, nervous gestures. It had never occurred to him to jot down everything of interest said at the meeting; he had been only half listening; he had run off after Yasha; his thoughts had wandered. Yet, as editor of *Tribuna*, he, more than anyone else, should have been listening to every sensible word that was spoken.

What had he been thinking about, he wondered. About how smart he had been to publish a letter that had aroused so much interest? About how pretty Lyuba looked? Yet, Lepikhin had not missed a single interesting point, and had criticized everything that needed to be criticized.

"When we're working on an order we ought always to keep in mind all the latest achievements in that sphere," said Lepikhin. "We must always keep on the track of creative ideas and not let them get away from us. The way we think now is this: We've been given wonderful machine-tools, marvellous cutting-tools, we're using the most up-to-date fast rotation methods, so let's use them to full capacity. But what we ought to be thinking is this: The machines are all right, so are the cutting-tools, the methods we use were not bad yesterday but aren't there better methods today?"

"That's all right, but where are those methods?" asked Dusya. "There are only three of us working on our welding set—me and my two assistants. True, a new fellow has joined us but there's nothing at all interesting about his methods."

She shrugged disdainfully: what new methods could she be expected to learn from that new fellow? But Lepikhin said that though he knew nothing whatever about welding sets he did not share Dusya's opinion that things could be learned only from one's own factory.

"D'you think I'm so daft as to think that," Dusya said. "I've been to other places, too. I've looked round for myself, taught others my own methods—nobody had caught me up."

She spoke with supreme assurance. Even when she had been visiting an aunt in the Ukraine and one of the family had taken her to his factory, she had noticed nobody working better than she did. Why, she had taught one girl there her own methods and the girl had been ever so grateful, she'd visited them several times afterwards.

"New, advanced methods don't always win through at once," said Lepikhin. "Take that invention of Kovalev's. There's a good thing all tied up in red tape that's now really hard to get untied. You were quite right to publish the designers' letter, Comrade Korolev, but it's not here in the factory that the brake's been put on, it's up there where our newspaper's never read."

"It's important to draw the factory manager and the chief engineer into the struggle for that excavator," said Andrei, delighted that Lepikhin had noticed the designers' letter. "Their support would mean a lot."

"I have my doubts whether their support will be very active. If they'd wanted to do anything about the matter, they'd have done it at the beginning. . . ."

The new clock on the wall struck ten, then half-past. Maria had cleared the table long ago, put the ink-pot away and smoothed the tablecloth. She kept on looking at her husband with increasing concern—how tired he must be—he had to be up early in the morning, and he still had his lesson with Ivan Konstantinovich.

Maria was deeply in love with her husband, but she still regarded him a little as a doctor regards a patient. She thought he neglected his health in some respects and was somewhat reluctant to keep to the regimen she had laid down for him. And now, when Lepikhin noticed her reproachful looks, he frowned, turned his back on her and pressed the others to stay whenever they showed signs of making a move.

Maria, however, found an ally in Ivan Konstantinovich. He appeared at the door, grasping his old brief-case and an intricately carved walking-stick—a gift from his grandchildren.

"I thought you wouldn't feel like coming to see me after work," the old man said, "so I decided to walk over myself. It's a fine evening. Been indoors all day. Glad to have a chance of stretching my legs."

It had been not quite like that. The old teacher had simply grown weary of waiting; and, grumbling to himself at his unpunctual pupil, had come to find him, not without a good deal of stumbling in the darkness. He had felt far from glad as he climbed the steep slope to the Lepikhins, and had been obliged to wait on the porch for a long while getting his breath back.

At last everybody got up and left. The evening was nothing like as fine as Ivan Konstantinovich had asserted—a mist had risen from the lake and the wind had got up, making the pine trees sway and moan. There was a rumble of distant thunder. It was pitch dark and Andrei had to offer his arm to Lyuba who tripped on the path at once. The tongue-tied fitter vanished without saying another word. Dusya grabbed Andrei's other arm.

"Let's see Lyuba home first," she said. "Then you can take me. I'm not going to the old village by myself, not me. And then you can see yourself home."

They walked down the steep slope, sending the gravel rattling down before them. The path had not been fully trodden down—the Lepikhins' house was new and its inhabitants had not yet had time to trample it hard.

"In the old village the roads are hard as rock," said Dusya as she stumbled on.

Dusya was in a good mood. She even hummed her favourite "Bird-Cherry" but neither of her companions joined in, so she began to pump Lyuba about what was worrying her.

"What was it Maria Lepikhina told you? Your face changed all at once. I saw it."

"Yes, she told me something very unpleasant."

"What was it, though? Unpleasant for whom? For you?"

"Yes, for me. As secretary of the Comsomol, I mean."

Lyuba fell silent again. That made Dusya angry. As a member of the Comsomol committee, she said, she had right of access to all information on matters concerning Comsomol members. Lyuba was wrong to keep everything to herself; she was snubbing the collective. To which Lyuba replied that she was not snubbing the collective but preferred to think things over for herself before talking about them.

"And as for you being a committee member, I advise you to pay some attention to the behaviour of the young people in the turnery."

When they reached her home, Lyuba curtly wished her companions good night, walked up to the front door and rapped on it hard.

"She thinks I don't know her secret," Dusya said immediately the door had shut behind Lyuba. "There's not a secret in the place I don't know. I come from here. I've got friends everywhere. I know Lyuba's secret all right."

"Why were you pestering her for it then?"

"I wanted to hear it from her. I wanted to know how she looks at the whole affair. Well, if she doesn't want to tell, I don't care. You see, Lyuba's secret's been sitting in our house since this morning."

Dusya was easier to handle than Lyuba, so without any more ado, Andrei asked how a secret could sit in anybody's house. Then Dusya explained that the secret consisted of a factory girl who had tried to drown herself in the lake. She had been rescued and taken to the polyclinic.

"She doesn't come from here. She lives in the hostel," Dusya explained. "Mother happened to be at the polyclinic when she was brought in. She heard Maria and the other doctors telling her that she ought to have the baby, that the state would help her and that she ought to apply to the Comsomol, and get the fellow to face his responsibilities and so on. The girl listened to the doctors for a long time as if agreeing with them, but when she went out, Mother saw her go straight back to the lake. Mother stopped her, had a good talk with her and brought her back home. Since then the girl's been sitting there crying. What happens next we don't know. That's the secret Lyuba thinks oughtn't to be told."

When they stopped to say good night near Dusya's house, she asked Andrei in, as if she had quite forgotten how late it was. Andrei declined the invitation. The house lay in darkness except for a glimmer of light from the kitchen where Dusya's mother and her visitor were probably waiting up for her.

"I expect they're both sitting there crying," said Dusya. "I'll calm them down all right."

She shut the garden gate with a clang. Andrei felt certain Dusya would really succeed in consoling the unhappy, frightened girl who had been driven to the lake by her terror and despair.



Full of new impressions and happy about the course the evening had taken, happy too that he was beginning to share the cares and worries of people round him, Andrei opened the door of his room. The light was out. Nikolai must be working late. Or had he gone off again with those new friends of his?

Feeling for the switch, he turned on the light and saw Nikolai, fully dressed, stretched at full length on his bed. His eyes were wide open; he looked at Andrei but said nothing.

"So you're back," Andrei said happily. "Fine. I've had a marvelous evening."

He sat on the edge of Nikolai's bed and told him about Lepikhin and his wife, and about Lyuba and Dusya. After a moment's hesitation, he told him about the girl who had tried to take her life.

Nikolai said nothing and showed no interest in anything Andrei told him. He looked worn out and ill-humoured.

"Why, what's the matter, Nikolai?" Andrei said suddenly. "Here am I burbling on without asking how you're getting on. . . ."

"Me? Oh, the same as usual," Nikolai said grudgingly. "We did our quota of work today. We'd practically no rejects. We'll soon finish the order we're working on. Oh yes, there is some news today," he threw in casually. "Two turners want to leave my section. They've asked for a transfer."

"Any reason given?"

"Ask 'em yourself," Nikolai snapped. "Don't like their foreman, that's what it is. Oh, to hell with them. We'll manage without them. We'll get others who'll be as good."

He sat up, stretched himself and yawned in a way that emphasized his utter contempt for the turners who wanted to leave him. But Andrei knew his friend too well to be taken in.

Chapter Eight

1

Valya came into the room, flung herself on her bed and, sobbing loudly, buried her head in the pillow. From their places round the table her room-mates watched her heaving back with alarm. One of them grabbed a tumbler and ran to the bathroom for some water.

The bathroom was hot and steamy. Under the hissing shower danced a pink and glowing Polina.

"Hello, Zinochka," she yelled. "You're just in time. Give my back a rub, will you?"

"Can't," said Zina, hastily turning on the cold tap at one of the wash-basins. "Valya's feeling bad. . . ."

Valya still had her face buried in the pillow; the girls fussed over her as she sobbed out disjointed phrases. Zina raised Valya's head firmly and offered her the water, putting the tumbler right up to Valya's mouth so that some water spilled on her frock.

"What d'you think you're doing?" cried Valya. "Spilling cold water over me, it might give the Baby a cold."

She sipped a little water, started sobbing again and told the girls that she was expecting her baby in about three weeks' time and that she and Vladimir had just been to the housing department, only to be told that for the time being no apartment was available.

"We'd been counting so much on that new house—so very much, but they say it's going to be for workers with high qualifications. Now we'll just have to go on waiting. How long, though? Where am I to take my baby?"

At that moment the door was flung wide open and in burst Polina, wearing a bathrobe. Her hair was damp, her skin rosy pink from her bath.

When she found out what was wrong, her first reaction was to blame Vladimir. "Couldn't handle a thing like this, the silly oaf." Then she vented her wrath upon the factory trade-union committee, the factory manager, the housing department.

"If I were in your shoes," she cried to Valya, "I'd not have left their offices until I'd got what I wanted. I'd sit there and wait all day and the next if necessary. Have you ever heard of such a way of treating people? What's more, I'd write and complain to our deputy to the Supreme Soviet."

Then, lowering her voice, she sat down and said calmly: "And now, Valya, don't be a little silly. You mustn't think of leaving this place. Move the beds about a bit and make room for a cot. You can put the baby in the crèche during the day and it can sleep here at night."

The idea of keeping the child at their hostel appealed to the girls at once. Valya alone objected. Raising her tearful, swollen face, she asked what would happen if the baby cried a lot and kept the girls from sleeping. They'd be annoyed then.

"But why should it cry?" asked Polina. "It won't if you look after it the way they teach at the consultations."

Looking round, Polina started making suggestions about how things should be rearranged to make room for the baby. Valya, however, said that she wanted to live together with Vladimir and the baby. What kind of family life would she have if they were all separated—the mother here, the father there, and the baby in a crèche?

"I want a room of our own, a separate one where we can be together."

"Who doesn't?" said Polina. "But it's your own fault. Why did you hide from everybody that you were pregnant? You've got to think of the position of the factory manager, too—he can't provide accommodation for everybody all at once."

"I was ashamed," said Valya. "Vladimir wanted me to mention it but I was ashamed...."

"Ashamed?" cried Polina. "You were born yourself, weren't you? Your mother wasn't ashamed of you. If I were married I'd have a baby every year until I became a Heroine Mother. They say you get a lovely medal for that. I've never seen one, though."

One of the girls had seen the medal and explained what it looked like. Valya listened with interest and then, somewhat calmer, showed Polina the green silk quilt that she had bought for the baby.

"I chose green because I don't know whether it's a boy or a girl," she

said. "It's pink for a girl and blue for a boy, you know. Green will go with either."

After talking a little more about the future baby, Polina left. She was in a hurry to get to the hairdresser's ("I can't go to work looking like this"). With her departure, Valya's spirits fell again.

But there was not much time for worrying. Soon Vladimir would be arriving for his dinner, and she had nothing ready. Valya tidied the rumpled bed, took a saucepan out of her locker and went into the kitchen. The other girls picked up their sewing and went into the next room; whenever Vladimir came to see his wife, they always tried to leave them on their own.

Nazarenko came in looking gloomy. His face was pale and drawn. He crossed the room as quietly as he could and sat on the very edge of a chair. There was a rather strict rule about not letting men into the girls' hostel but an exception was made for husbands coming to have their meals with their wives.

Valya spread a check-patterned table-cloth on a corner of the table, laid places for two, a mat for the dish and a glass in a shiny metal holder. Everything was new—recent purchases, bright and attractive. But nothing could give Valya any pleasure that day. She served the soup -- sniff—she cut the bread—sniff.

"D'you think it's any easier for me?" Vladimir said, pushing away his soup plate. "I suppose you think I'm a rotter just because I'm not blubbing. Maybe I feel it a thousand times harder than you do."

"Harder!" Valya sobbed. "I know how hard it is for you! You take that trombone of yours under your arm and go off to toot on it, while I lie awake worrying and crying my heart out. It's bad for Baby too; bad for its nerves...."

"What have I done wrong?" Vladimir sprang to his feet, overturning the chair. "So it's my trombone! Why, music's my only consolation these days."

"It's all right for you. You can console yourself with your music and going to restaurants with Yasha while I sit at home by myself. I'd have found myself a 'consolation' too, but where can I go with my tummy sticking out like this? Who wants me? Who'll look at me? Oh, I can't think why I ever married you."

Valya's head dropped to the table. The soup splashed on to the new table-cloth. A girl looked into the room and departed at once, slamming the door. Vladimir, perplexed, sorry for Valya and, at the same time angry with himself, picked up his cap.

"You'll be sorry you said that," he exclaimed. "Oh yes, you'll be sorry, but it will be too late."

He left the room shutting the door noisily. Valya stopped crying and looked up. He had gone. What did he mean when he said she would be sorry but too late? What was he going to do next?

When the girls crept back into the room, they found Valya sitting at the table in front of a plate of cold soup. She was staring blankly in front of her. She was not crying but her face expressed such utter misery that her friends stood petrified at the doorway.

"Come in," Valya said feebly. "He's gone. Left without even eating his dinner.... Oh dear, what's going to happen to me now?"

Next day Polina arrived at the *Tribuna* office very early. There was nobody in the print-shop; Poperechny sat at Valya's typewriter thumping out his own copy.

"I was thinking—Valya will soon be going off on her maternity leave, so I'm having a bit of practice," he said to Polina. "Have a look through this and see whether I've made many mistakes."

Scoring the mistakes with a red pencil, Polina sat down on the visitors' bench. She asked Poperechny whether Andrei would be long, and when he shook his head, studied her watch as if to emphasize that she had not much time to waste in sitting about waiting.

Polina was dressed up for some important occasion. She was wearing a new dark-blue costume and a severely cut blouse. She did not rise to Poperechny's jokes, and when Andrei turned up at last, she told him that she wished to have a confidential talk with him. She pronounced the word confidential very significantly. Andrei wondered, with some concern, whether Polina was going to announce her intention of leaving them again.

"Please sit down, Polina Georgievna," he said, pulling up a chair. "You may talk in Vanya's presence quite freely."

But Polina did not wish to talk in Vanya's presence. Drawing Andrei away from the typewriter to the window, she told him in a whisper about Valya's unhappy plight.

"She didn't sleep a wink last night. Crying all the time. That's very bad for a young mother-to-be, you know. You must do something about it, Andrei Borisovich."

Pursing her lips, she stood waiting for Andrei to say something. What Andrei had to say was that he felt very sorry for Valya but that there were other young newly-weds in the same situation, as letters received by the paper showed. He had thought of printing a selection of them long ago but was afraid that it would not help because there were so many things wrong in the housing situation.

"The factory is expanding more rapidly than the housing," he said, repeating a phrase he had heard the factory manager use. "There's only one thing to be done—to build more houses. And meanwhile be patient and double up."

"I understand all that perfectly," said Polina. "But motherhood is something sacred. When there are no children people can wait, but those who have children or who are expecting them ought to be first on the list. Of course, I've no right to meddle in the editorial work but I would have printed some of those letters on the problem of newly-weds. I'd be ready to write an article about Valya and Vladimir myself."

"Let's hear what Lyuba Zvonaryeva thinks of the idea. The Comsomol committee has had some complaints about accommodation too."

Recently, Andrei often found reason to visit the Comsomol committee office. And each time Lyuba seemed to have been expecting him—she was always in and she always welcomed him with a smile. This time too she was sitting at her desk clipping something out of the *Tribuna*.

"I want to send a reply to Bashkiria," she said, noticing that Andrei was looking at the cuttings. "I'll send them everything you printed about their order and add the resolution our meeting adopted. I had a talk

with Kovalev yesterday—in his shop all the things we suggested have been introduced.”

Lyuba looked sweet-tempered and happy. She was clearly delighted that the initiative taken by the Comsomol committee had turned out right and that it had won the support of older people. Andrei was only too eager to go on talking about a subject in which Lyuba took so much interest. He looked through everything she had prepared to send to the oil workers, told her that Kovalev and Lepikhin were putting their ideas on the subject down in writing for the *Tribuna*, and promised to publish in each number a report on the progress of work on the order.

Polina listened with mounting impatience, frequently glancing at her watch. It wasn't for this that she had brought the editor to Zvonaryeva. Of course, it was most important that the oil workers should get their equipment early so that they could build their new town more quickly, but was that room for Valya and Vladimir any less important?

“I've got to be in the print-shop in five minutes, Andrei Borisovich,” she said, with another glance at her watch. “Perhaps we'll tell Lyuba what we came to see her about.”

“Oh yes,” said Andrei. “Listen, Lyuba.”

Lyuba frowned but let Polina have her say.

“I don't know what we can do,” she said with a shrug. “The Comsomol committee has no flats to dispose of. It's the shops that do the allocating. True, every time a new house is finished I run after the shop managers and argue that they shouldn't forget the newly-weds, but my list's a very long one. Of course, I could add Valya's name to it but it'll be a long time before her turn comes.”

“Why's that?” cried Polina. “Valya's as good as anybody else, isn't she?”

“She is but she's no better. And then neither she nor Vladimir told anybody that there was a baby coming along so soon. Vladimir ought to work on Kovalev.”

Polina, however, had no confidence in Vladimir; she wanted Lyuba herself to speak to Kovalev. In the end Lyuba wrote “Nazarenko, Valentina—with husband and child” at the bottom of her list.

When Polina had left, Lyuba put the list away and sighed. Really, something ought to be done about this problem.

“What if we ask for one of the apartment houses now being built to be ear-marked for the newly-weds?” Andrei suggested. “It could be known as the House of the Newly-Wed. It'd be the most attractive, the brightest building in the place. I'm sure it'd be built in no time. Every prospective tenant would give a hand after work or on Sundays. Come on, Lyuba, let's start a campaign together for the House of the Newly-Wed—the Comsomol and the *Tribuna* together.”

“You talk about that house as if you'd some personal interest in it. Maybe you have.”

“Not at present. I'm quite disinterested.”

Andrei took out of his brief-case a bunch of letters from young people who had recently married, and sat down beside Lyuba. Lyuba pretended not to notice that he had pulled his chair closer to her. She read the letters with a serious face and put one of them aside as not worth printing: the husband and wife were both slackers; the wife had stopped working and was living with her parents in the old village.

"They've a room as it is, they're living with her people. But the parents want to get rid of them because the son-in-law's a drunkard and a rowdy."

The letters turned out to be rather monotonous in their contents: everybody wrote that they wanted to live a real family life—and that meant separate accommodation. But Lyuba and Andrei added a brief editorial to the letters, mentioning the idea of a house for newly-wed couples and even pointing at a definite four-storey house being built in a very lovely place, on rising ground overlooking the lake.

"If only we had a picture," said Lyuba. "What a pity we can't use one. You know, a pretty house with a loggia and balconies with flower pots. And a garden full of flowers in front."

"I think we've got just the picture that'll do. It's of some rest home or other. Let's go and have a look." They went into Andrei's office. Polina soon found the half-tone they required. There were some discrepancies, to be sure: the building had three, not four floors, and stood not on a rise but in a broad meadow; moreover, there was a sign on the gate that clearly showed it to be a miners' rest home.

"We'll cut out the signboard," Polina assured Andrei. "There's an engraver working in the first machine shop. And underneath we'll use the caption: 'This is what the House of the Newly-Wed ought to look like.'"

She bounced off to the workshop, saying she would use the occasion to get another letter on the subject. Lyuba sighed and went to post her reply to the oil workers.

"I'll drop in this evening to see the letters you're going to use," she said. "Will that be all right?"

"It will, Lyuba. Do come. I'll expect you."

3

For several days Andrei and Nikolai had scarcely met. They returned to their room late at night, Nikolai trying to be the first back and in bed asleep by the time Andrei came in. Or pretending to be asleep. Obviously he did not want to have one of those heart-to-heart talks he used to value so highly.

But this evening he could not avoid a talk. Andrei had come back early and Nikolai could not possibly pretend to be asleep; elbows on pillow, he had to listen to Andrei telling him about the House for the Newly-Wed, about how Lyuba and he had been to have a look at the house that was going up, and how they had climbed to the very top and had a splendid view of the surrounding countryside.

Andrei told all this in a most animated way; he suddenly noticed, however, that Nikolai was looking at him quite vacantly; it was doubtful whether he was even listening.

"What on earth's the matter, Nikolai?" he said. "What's wrong? Tell me."

But Nikolai did not reply. He sat on the edge of the bed, looking pale and ruffled, the edge of a blanket drawn over one bare shoulder, his bare feet swinging between the bed and the floor. His light blue singlet and somewhat darker shorts, his thin neck and prominent collar bone made him look like the young Nik of school or college days in Moscow.

"Things are still going badly in the shop," Nikolai said at length. "The older workers have turned against me. Instead of helping me they're up to all sorts of dodges. And the young workers haven't any experience. Nor have I, for that matter. . . ."

"What did I tell you? It isn't so easy to become a foreman. You need experience! And that takes time."

"But we can't take time over our work we've got to deliver right away," Nikolai said gloomily. "We were behindhand yesterday. The same today. Kovalev's told me once already that things are getting worse in my section. I realize now how hard it is to go into a shop straight from college. I heard from Bychkov today—he's in the same mess as I am."

Bychkov belonged to Nikolai's year at college. On graduation he had taken a job at a machine-building works in the Ukraine where he was appointed assistant duty-engineer in a large workshop. He had written twice to Nikolai—the first letter was full of jubilation about his new work but the second was all complaints about quite insuperable difficulties.

"Bychkov always used to mope and get the wind up," said Andrei. "I remember the way he was before every exam. He's not a good example. Now take Sharov; why is he such a good foreman? He didn't go to college, only to a technical school and he's had no more practical experience than you."

"But they do practical work right away at technical school, not like we did it at college. They get used to work there, don't you see? Sharov didn't have to learn how to work here in the factory; he brought that with him."

The blanket slipped off Nikolai's shoulder. He pulled it up to his chin.

"Getting used to work isn't something that can be inoculated into you," said Andrei. "If a chap's lazy or if he shies away from real work, he can work all his life without getting used to it."

"So I'm lazy, am I? If that's what you think, it's no good talking to you at all. Anyway, we'd better go to sleep."

Pursing his lips as he used to do as a little boy when anybody offended him, Nikolai lay down and drew the blanket over his head. The blanket was short and, as he tugged, it came clear of his feet. Andrei could see the toes wiggling on those feet. Oh no, Nik was not asleep, Nik didn't want to go to sleep. He was simply offended, he was lying there feeling bad, angry maybe. And, true enough, Nik couldn't be called lazy. What was wrong with him was something quite different: he was indecisive, lacked confidence in his own strength, he was instinctively drawn to whoever was the stronger, without understanding what real strength consisted of.

Ragged clouds raced across the sky and the room became quite dark. Andrei yawned and felt drowsy. But Nikolai raised his head from the pillow and sat up again.

"It's easy for you to criticize. You have quite a different kind of work to do. You don't have turners coming up to you and saying: 'Comrade foreman, there's something wrong with my lathe, please help me.' That happens to me several times a day. And I can't send for the repair-men every time, can I? I don't want to get the reputation everywhere of not knowing my job. Though there are times when I don't know it. And then the older workers look at me and mock: there's a babe in arms who's

wangled a job as a foreman but doesn't know a thing about the work. What was the good of my learning the integral calculus and how to draw all kinds of projections if I can't even repair the simplest lathe?"

"If you can't repair it yourself, ask somebody who can do it."

"There you are again: 'ask somebody.' I can't go on endlessly asking and asking. I won't have any authority if I do that. After all, I'm a foreman—the main link in the production process."

Bounding from the bed, Nikolai started pacing up and down the room, complaining about everybody who was undermining his authority—about the older workers who laughed at him behind his back; about Dusya who, the day before, had announced in the hearing of all that she had been told to show him the ropes in the shop, and finally about the institute where nobody had taken the trouble to prepare him properly for his future work.

Propping his head on his hands, Andrei watched Nikolai—the blue blanket flung over Nikolai's shoulder, with one end trailing behind, revealing the bare lanky legs, the schoolboy face, the snub nose, the hair all awry. So this was the "main link" in the production process! If only that "main link" could see itself just now with its dragging tail, its thin sparrow legs, its ruffled hair, its pitiful eyes. . . .

"It isn't so easy to become a 'main link,' Nik. You think it's enough to be appointed foreman. You've got to show by your work that you really are a foreman and only then ask people to treat you with respect. It's no good sticking your nose up, Nik; you ought to be more modest."

"Modest! It's not modesty I lack. It's something quite different—decisiveness. Yes, decisiveness. That's something nobody can work properly without. I don't want to blame Mother, but all my life, since I was a kid, she's been drumming into me that the main human virtue is modesty. But while learning to be modest I acquired some wretched things as well: shyness, indecisiveness, doubts whether I had the right attitude about anything. Why have I always got to consider myself the last of all? Why should I think that everyone is better than me? That modesty you talk about has been the ruin of my private life. . . . Look at this."

Flinging off the blanket, Nikolai bent down and dragged a suitcase from under his bed.

"Read this," he said, handing Andrei a letter written in an even, flowing hand. "It's from Nina."

"Thanks for your letters which I've been such a long time in replying to," Andrei read. "Though really there was no need to answer them because you don't ask me anything. You write quite poetically with your nice descriptions of nature and the stars and flowers, etc. I'm awfully glad you've been made a foreman and that you're settling down at the job. I've taken all my exams. Will get my degree soon and then go somewhere to work. I haven't decided where to go, though. I'd like to choose a place where the scenery is as pretty as it is where you are so that we can exchange letters describing the pines and birch trees. Best wishes to Andrei. Nina."

"You jackass. Run to the post-office and send her a telegram. 'Love you. Waiting for you. Kisses. Nikolai.' Why, she's looking round for somewhere to go. Don't you understand what you ought to be writing? Or have I got to do it for you?"

"Don't you dare." Nikolai sprang forward and snatched the letter out of Andrei's hand. "You've no right to interfere. And stop bossing me. You're always doing it."

"Oh, all right, do things your own silly way. You'll be sorry for it afterwards, when it's too late."

Outside it was raining. The rain drummed on the metal window-sill, splashed noisily into the drain pipes. Then a gust of wind slammed the window noisily to and at once all the sounds outside became muffled and monotonous. The gentle patter of the raindrops brought sleep to Andrei. Nikolai lay feeling hurt and listening to his companion's steady breathing; then he rolled over on his other side and began to think about what he would write to Nina in the morning.

Chapter Nine

1

The editor of *Tribuna* sent an enquiry to the factory manager: "Please inform us what measures have been taken in connection with the letter from a group of designers concerning Engineer A. M. Kovalev's invention." The factory manager's secretary put the letter in the Urgent file, but though Budanov read it he kept putting off his reply.

"What measures have been taken?" Well, there was a time when much had been done: an experimental machine built, tests carried out—yes, and caps had been flung into the air after them—requests made for the machine to be put into production. Budanov recalled that something like a banquet had been arranged in Kovalev's honour when he received his patent for the invention. And then? Then nothing was done; the request to include the machine in the production plan was turned down on the grounds that an improved type of a similar machine was being prepared. This was followed by the design of the new machine; the designing office set to work on it.

The new machine was called the Kurzhen. It had been designed at the head office. In the opinion of the factory designers it fell far short of Kovalev's "shrew," but obviously the head office knew better than they what kind of machine was needed. There was much talk on the subject at the factory where people were indignant that the "shrew" had not been properly appreciated; but an order is an order and many people worked on the Kurzhen with good will. An experimental one was built, it was taken off somewhere for tests, but since then all talk about either machine had come to an end, tempers had cooled and even Kovalev seemed to have forgotten about his invention.

And now, if you please, the new editor of *Tribuna* drags the whole affair into the newspaper and asks the management for a reply.

Reflectively Budanov scrawled across the bottom of the letter: "Fully agree with the opinion of the writers of this letter. Would be glad to put the Kovalev machine into production. Have frequently approached my superiors on the subject. Am today sending memo to head office requesting the factory be permitted to include the machine in its production plan. Budanov, factory manager."

Without delay he wrote to the head office, saying that as the Kurzhen had not come back from its tests and the factory had no information about its work, he was repeating his request to include the Kovalev machine in the factory's production programme, especially as it had passed several tests.

When Budanov had signed the letter he walked to the shops, dropping in on Stoletov on the way.

"I've written to head office and enclosed cuttings from the *Tribuna*," he said. "We'll see what happens."

"I've heard nothing myself," said Stoletov. "I tried writing to a man I know there but nothing came of it."

He took a copy of his letter from his files and showed it to Budanov.

"Yes, you've got all the facts there," said Budanov after reading the letter. "But you wrote to the wrong address, it seems to me. So far as I know, Zhukov is directly interested in the Kurzhen. Try and think of somebody else you could write to."

Stoletov, however, found it hard to believe that a leading expert—an engineer, moreover—could hold up the construction of an excellent and much-needed machine for personal reasons.

"I'll write once again," he said.

Thinking that perhaps Zhukov had not received the first letter, Stoletov rewrote the whole detailed story of the Kovalev invention, adding that this was his second letter on the subject and that he hoped for a reply this time.

"I am firmly convinced that the mechanism that Comrade Kovalev has invented is something that the national economy requires," he wrote in conclusion. "I shall raise the question everywhere: at the Ministry, with the Council of Ministers, with the Central Committee. I am counting on your help in this campaign. I am not going to drop it on any account."

That last phrase pleased him tremendously: let the fellow realize that the policy of keeping silent was no use now. He'd reply all right.

Stoletov sent the letter registered, put the counterfoil away in his wallet and went to Kovalev's shop. Before calling on the shop manager, he spoke to Syurtukov who was, as usual, complaining about the foundry and the forge. Then he stopped for a few minutes to watch Yasha Milovidov at work on his lathe.

Smart work, he thought, eyeing the parts piling up beside the lathe. He wondered whether there were many rejects.

He thought of asking the foreman but did not find Nikolai in his usual place: Yelena Protasova was sitting there, writing something down with an air of concentration.

"Good morning. Where's your foreman?" asked Stoletov.

"He's gone to see the shop manager. They're allocating flats in the new house today. He's gone to try and help his pals."

At that moment Yasha walked by with an unlighted cigarette dangling from his lips. Yasha's self-confident face was drawn and haggard; a long dark scratch stretched right across one cheek.

"See that?" Yelena nodded after Yasha. "Nice bit of decoration."

"How's his work?"

"All right," Yelena said vaguely. "Why shouldn't it be?"

When Stoletov reached the shop manager's office, he found there Kovalev, Nikolai Zhukov, the shop trade-union organizer and two turners

from Nikolai's section—Vladimir Nazarenko and an older man. All of them looked flushed and excited; Vladimir was red to the tips of his ears and his face wore an obstinate look. He was standing next to Nikolai and it was clear they were on each other's side.

"You can appeal to the factory trade-union committee if you like," Kovalev was saying when Stoletov came in. "But I'm not going to change the order on my list."

"I shall appeal to the trade-union committee and to the Comsomol committee," snapped Nikolai. "I consider your attitude to the young workers quite unfair."

He swung on his heel and went out, slamming the door. Kovalev winced as if he had toothache and handed a slip to the older worker.

"Take this to the housing department," he said. "You can move in without any worries. Nazarenko will have to wait until the next house is built."

The workers went out, followed by the shop trade-union organizer. Stoletov asked what the argument had been about. About flats, he was told: several flats in a new house had been allotted to the shop; these flats had been promised to the older workers; Nikolai, however, had insisted that one of them be given to Nazarenko on the grounds that his wife was expecting a baby.

"If I'd been told about it earlier, we could, perhaps, have squeezed another flat out of the factory manager. But Nazarenko didn't say a word about it. How on earth was I to know that the young fellow was about to become the father of a family?"

And, indeed, it was difficult to imagine Vladimir Nazarenko in that role. Stoletov smiled at the very idea. But Kovalev went on fuming, saying that as a result of that row, an experienced turner would quit the shop or, at least, Zhukov's section of it.

"Zhukov doesn't know how to get on with the older workers," Kovalev complained. "We've few enough of them as it is; they need careful handling, they're valuable."

"They shouldn't be so quick to take offence, though."

"Oh, those old fellows have their sense of pride. They know their worth. When young Zhukov first came to us, they were polite enough to him. True, they had their bit of fun but that was to be expected. But Zhukov didn't realize they were joking. So relations grew strained. . . . Maybe the lad wants to be independent and manage everything on his own. I had a letter from his father not long ago. He's a well-known engineer in Moscow. I know him slightly. He wrote to tell me he'd given his son a letter asking me to give him a helping hand to begin with. What had I done about it, he asked me. But I never saw that letter—the boy never gave it to me."

"Did you ask him why he didn't?"

"I did. He said he didn't want to use any influence. . . ."

"Good for him. By the way, I wrote again today about your 'shrew.' Asked for an immediate reply. If I don't get one, I'll take the matter up elsewhere."

Without saying a word, Kovalev placed some castings on his desk. Then he put a few folders into a drawer and looked at Stoletov glumly.

"There was no sense in doing that, Stepan Demyanovich," he said at last. "I've already told you, as far as I'm concerned the whole affair's



over. I don't want to resurrect it. In any case I don't believe in the resurrection of the dead."

Stoletov went out feeling somewhat annoyed with Kovalev. As he crossed the yard he noticed Andrei and Lyuba sitting together in his office. They were talking and laughing about something and did not notice him pass the open window.

"In the evening when work's over," he heard Andrei say, "I wish you would, Lyuba. . . ."

Lyuba's reply was inaudible.

Why on earth had they chosen his office for their talk, Stoletov wondered. They might have found some other place. . . .

He went into his office; he brushed aside the copy of the newspaper that Andrei handed him.

"I've seen it. I don't agree with your idea. What we need to do is to see there are decent homes for

all and not build special houses for newly-weds, for old folk, for engaged couples and so on."

Lyuba and Andrei looked at Stoletov in surprise: they could not understand why he was so angry. They had been quite certain that he would support them. They had been waiting for him, hoping that he would commend the paper and the Comsomol for their interesting initiative and help them as he had done over everything hitherto.

"You've taken on too much: the oil workers' order and now this house. You're not seeing things through. You'll come a cropper when it turns out that you've not fulfilled your promises."

"We'll fulfil them," said Lyuba. "You ask the factory manager how we're getting on."

She turned to Budanov who had just come in and smilingly asked for his support. Not knowing what was going on, Budanov said nothing, but returned Lyuba's smile: Lyuba was a pretty girl. And the editor, he was an up-and-coming young fellow: you wouldn't find one like him at other factories.

Lyuba did not pursue the matter of the oil workers' letter any farther and asked Budanov whether he had read the proposal printed in the newspaper about building an apartment house specially for the newly-wed. Budanov said yes, he had, and wanted to know how many marriages the Comsomol committee had planned for the coming year, so that he could plan the construction of the aforementioned house accordingly.

"Of course we've got no plan," said Lyuba. "How can such events take place according to plan?"

"Aha, so they can't! You admit that?" Budanov crowed. "Then what guarantee can you give me that the house will be sufficient for your newly-

weds—even for the first year's batch? You'll have a new waiting list in a couple of months. So what do we do then? Build another house?"

The colour rushed to Lyuba's cheeks.

"The task of the Comsomol is to protect the interests of young people trying to found families. We must help those who have fallen in love and who've decided to live together and have children and live a family life..."

Lost for further argument, Lyuba stopped and transfixed Budanov with an angry eye. Budanov smiled, and Lyuba suddenly realized that her cheeks must be bright red and her hair in a mess and her face altogether much too excited-looking for the leader of a youth organization. Her hand darted to her hair, she applied a handkerchief to her cheeks, but the look she cast Budanov remained bold and full of fight.

"You ought to take our difficulties into account, comrades, if only a little bit," Budanov said, addressing all three of them. "During the last few years we've built a whole town starting from zero. A town. Not to mention the factory itself. And we've not stopped building; we've got everybody's interests in mind. But we just can't do it all at once. You really ought to go a bit easier with your marriages."

Budanov glanced at Andrei and Lyuba and said, as if at a tangent: "People are so confident about the future that they're getting married while they still have to live in hostels. And quite right, too... But as to that house of yours—well, that's not such a simple matter," he hastened to add, catching Lyuba's hopeful look. "That requires thinking over. I must get some advice and consider the pros and cons. What's your opinion, Stepan Demyanovich?"

Stoletov understood; Budanov needed his support.

"My opinion is this: you'd be right to think how we can help our newly-weds. We're rather too fond of repeating that we've built a town from scratch. All right, so we have. But we're still badly short of housing. That's why all sorts of amateurish ideas like this House for the Newly-Wed crop up. I curse our Communists for turning in bad work at our study courses and for not doing their home-work, and one of them came to me the other day and said: 'Look here, I've got two children, a wife and a mother-in-law—five of us—all living in one room. I have to go into the woods to do my home-work in peace.' And he's right, too. And we go on boasting that we're building houses with modern plumbing, bathrooms and so forth. What's the good of crowing about bathrooms when people live five in a room. We're not building enough, that's the trouble. We're not fulfilling our programme. And we're not particularly bothered by the fact, either."

"Who isn't particularly bothered?"

"You and me in the first place. We're the main culprits..."

Andrei and Lyuba slipped out of the office; Stoletov picked up the paper and glanced at the article about the House for the Newly-Wed.

"Well, well, it's all there. Picture, too—flowers, balconies, archways and all. They haven't worked the idea out properly but it's a good thing they've taken it up, it'll make us think about the next step. After all, there are ways of building much more quickly. Conveyor methods can be introduced, houses can be assembled out of prefab panels—you can put a whole wall up at once without bothering with any bricks. We'll have

to insist that the regional organizations send us the machinery. Surely they'll let us have it if we raise the matter with them seriously."

"All the machinery's being used on new buildings in the town," said Budanov. "D'you think I haven't asked for it?"

"Well, you must have asked the wrong way. You asked by yourself." Just you. We've got to overwhelm them by numbers. And not ask—insist. Come on, let's have Koryakov in."

The building conference was under way. Budanov sent for Koryakov. Koryakov brought with him the civil engineer, and the civil engineer brought the supervisor. Stoletov's table was soon covered with plans, drawings, designs of future houses, working schedules, order forms for building materials.

"A splendid idea, this house for people who've just got married," said the young supervisor, looking through the newspaper. "If they're not stingy with funds, we could make the place really poetical."

Koryakov was of the opinion that one house wouldn't suffice—they'd be asking for a whole street, a whole neighbourhood for the newly-wed. The Comsomol had no consideration for others—the young people ought to go slow on getting married until there were enough houses.

When Budanov heard his own words on Koryakov's lips, they sounded silly.

"Nonsense," he objected sharply, "they're quite right to get a move on and marry. At your speed of getting things done, the working class would have to slow down all of its cultural requirements, too. And those requirements, by the way, are growing, and that without asking your permission."

Listening to Budanov, Stoletov recalled a talk he had had recently with Ivan Konstantinovich. "Why's he working as a simple pattern-maker?" Ivan Konstantinovich had asked about Lepikhin as he was preparing to go to his pupil's lesson. "He's a man of intelligence. You'll excuse my saying so, but he's much easier to teach than you were. You sometimes got stuck over the most elementary things, whereas Lepikhin has an all-round knowledge of things. That's true not only of him, incidentally. I'm working now with a group of lads who've just left school and who are preparing to take extra-mural courses. I tell you frankly, their cultural standards are considerably higher than the jobs they're doing require. Yet they're quite content to go on in their present positions. Lepikhin said to me not long ago: 'the highest position in the world is that of being a Soviet working man.'" Yes, thought Stoletov, it was a fine thing to be a Soviet working man, and it was a sad business when someone failed to realize, as did Koryakov, that the cultural requirements of the working people were rising every day.

"With all respect to you, comrade builders, let me remind you once and for all that you're going to have constantly growing demands made on you," Stoletov said. "At the present time we are building flats for highly-qualified workers; they have to have studies in them so that people can work at home if necessary, nurseries for the children, plenty of book-shelf space. But the ordinary run of worker is beginning to collect books too and to need somewhere to study. Young people are coming to work at the factory with secondary education; they're what you might call members of the Soviet intelligentsia."

"That intelligentsia of yours has scribbled dirty words over all the walls in the hostel in the old village," said Koryakov, scathingly. "They're up again as soon as we've whitewashed them out. Intelligentsia, pshaw!"

"Well, give the walls another coat of whitewash," said Budanov. "Or better still, use oil paint. Not that drab grey you're so fond of, but something bright—yellow or blue. Nice to look at. Something it would be a pity to spoil."

The working day was drawing to a close. Stoletov picked up the receiver.

"Wouldn't you like to come for me, Varya? I'm ready to leave. It's a lovely evening."

Though not fully apparent on the surface, a complete change had come over Stoletov's life with the arrival of his wife and children. He came to work as usual every morning, drove off to meetings and conferences at the regional committee of the Party, was still occupied with a host of different things. But his inner life was quite different now; wherever he was and whatever he did he knew that when he went home his sons would scamper to tell him everything that had happened to them during the day; Varya, looking at his face, could tell immediately whether he had had a good day; Ivan Konstantinovich, tactfully choosing the right moment, would share with him his impressions of what he had read in the newspapers.

Without these commonplace happenings Stoletov would have felt himself starved of those joys that every man deserves.

But he knew that with the coming of autumn and a new term at the music school Varya would leave Verkhnyaya Kamenka. She could not settle down to being a housewife. Surely, though, he could find her some suitable work. If only he could tempt her to take up running the music circle. When she arrived that evening he would show her the club, with its piano and its music room. He would let her hear the factory choir.

He made the suggestion when Varya turned up.

"Yes, let's do that," said Varya. "But not for long. We'll have a stroll afterwards."

They set out for the club. As they passed the factory gates they met Budanov who had driven up in a dusty, dark-blue Pobeda.

"Stepan Demyanovich! Just the man I want," he said. "I've just taken a turn with Koryakov round all the building sites. Please excuse me, Varvara Ivanovna, but I need him for half-an-hour."

He suggested that Varya drop in on his wife who was sitting at home by herself. He still had some work to do.

"Get in, do," he said, almost forcing Varya into the back of the car. He told the driver to take her to his flat.

Without knowing quite why, Varya obeyed this bird-headed lamp-post of a man. She had not the slightest wish to go and see Budanov's wife; she would gladly have gone home. But the children would probably be out at play, and Ivan Konstantinovich who had a lesson that evening would have left, leaning on the walking-stick his grandsons had carved for him, and carrying his battered old brief-case. She would be on her own.

Varya found Anna Budanova in the courtyard. She must have seen the car coming and thought it was bringing her husband home. When

she recognized Varya she stopped abruptly; her face clouded with disappointment; a second later, however, she held out a polite hand.

"Come in, come in, Varvara Ivanovna," she said. "Come and have a cup of tea. I've just taken a sponge-cake out of the oven."

The two women sat at the table and drank tea. Varya ate a piece of cake in silence. It tasted too sweet. Anna Budanova was on tenterhooks: wasn't that the front-door bell, wasn't that her husband's booming voice outside? But all that came was a telephone message: "Delayed for an hour or two at the factory. Don't worry."

"It's not that I worry," she complained to Varya. "I'm simply bored. You probably don't know it, but we lost our son here. Our younger son. The elder one was killed in the war."

She dabbed at her eyes, wiping away the tears that flowed so often and so copiously. Speaking almost in a whisper, she told Varya how the younger boy had caught a chill the winter they came to Verkhnyaya Kamenka while helping to unload the equipment. He was only fourteen but he just would not be outdone by his elders—his father and the workers. She had not kept him back, she had not looked after him; in her grief for her elder son she had neglected the younger.

"Every morning when my husband goes to the factory I go to the cemetery. I sit there and cry and tidy the grave. I know that the flowers and the monument are no use to him but I do my best. I deceive myself by pretending it's all for him."

The dusk crept into the room but Anna did not put on the light and continued to talk about her misfortune. Varya listened without making any attempt to console her—such grief is inconsolable.

"Why don't you take up some work, Anna Ivanovna?" Varya asked. "You would find things easier if you were among people."

"But what about my husband? Who would take care of him? Don't think he's strong and healthy, oh no. He's got a stomach ulcer, he can't take ordinary food; everything has to be minced. Only light foods, too. He's had half his stomach removed. Really, I don't know how he manages to keep going. So I couldn't go to work, you see. I might lose him."

If Stepan were in poor health could she, Varya, drop her work and devote all her thoughts, all her life to him? Would Stepan accept such a sacrifice from her? Yes, he probably would, for didn't he want her to stay here with him as it was?

"Sitting in the dark?" Budanov's merry voice reached them. "What are you two dreaming about? Didn't even hear me come in."

He switched on the light and scanned his wife's face. Her eyes were red again, she'd been crying, letting her thoughts dwell on the past. It had to stop; it wasn't right for anyone to live on memories alone.

"Where's Stepan?" asked Varya.

"Gone home. He thought you'd have left by now."

Varya rose. The Budanovs did not attempt to keep her—Anna was already warming something up on the hot plate watched by her husband's tender, concerned, but vexed eyes.

"I'm not hungry, Anna," he told her. "I had something to eat at the dietetic restaurant. Honestly I did, dear, I had some fritters, chicken broth and strawberries. Now, *you* couldn't offer me strawberries, could you?"

Varya wished them good night and went out. The car was at the door; she got in next to the driver.

"Home?"

"Yes, please," she said as she slammed the door.

Swinging the car round, the driver took it along the smooth asphalt, cutting across the square near the factory and passing the Stalingrad. Then the asphalt ended, the houses stood back from the road with trees in front of them. Varya could see the lit-up verandah of their flat long before they reached the house. She saw the white curtains, the porch, the wicket-gate where Stepan was standing, waving to her.

"So the lady of the house deserted us, eh?" he said as he walked to the car. "We managed all right, though. Fed the children, made them wash and put them to bed. We haven't had supper yet. We were waiting for you."

He helped his wife out of the car, took her by the arm and led her into the house where Ivan Konstantinovich stood in the door, wearing his best white jacket.

2

Smartly dressed and smelling strongly of eau-de-Cologne, Yasha had already managed to put away a drink or two and was in gay, expansive mood. Nikolai bumped into him at the door of the Stalingrad. Yasha at once insisted on accompanying him to the lake.

"There's a girl lives there who's celebrating her birthday or something. There'll be home-brewed ale and a gramophone. Let's go and have a good time, Nikolai Nikolayevich."

"But I don't know the girl. It'll be awkward," said Nikolai. "And I've got my working clothes on."

Yasha brushed aside Nikolai's objections. It doesn't take long to get acquainted. Nikolai would have to change, though: the girls over there liked to dress up and were very fussy about clothes.

He practically pushed Nikolai back through the door and ran up the stairs three at a time. Nikolai trailed after him, wondering what would happen when Yasha and Andrei met. Andrei would put on that official tone of his to emphasize his dislike of Yasha, and that would be very unpleasant.

But things worked out differently. Andrei greeted Yasha most politely, asked where they were off to, and proposed that he should go too.

"Take me along, unless you're afraid I shall pinch all your girls from you. I mean to dance non-stop the whole evening."

Yasha felt flattered: fancy a fellow like Andrei Korolev joining his company of his own accord. He assured Andrei at once that he could have a free run of the girls and that he would play his accord for Andrei to dance to. Carefully looking over the way his companions were dressed, he advised Andrei to change his grey tie for a blue striped one.

"Wear your hats. Not many of our boys have got hats. I'm thinking of getting one myself, but I don't know whether it'd suit me."

Andrei offered him his hat to try on; Yasha spent a long time looking at himself in the mirror. The hat suited him; he tilted it slightly, turned down the brim and at once looked like a film villain.

"Makes me look like an actor," he said with satisfaction. "As soon

as I get my next wage packet I'll go to town and buy myself a hat. Not a blue one, though. Green's more fashionable."

They had to walk to their destination, a lake-side factory where coloured local stone was made into ornaments. All the boats had been taken out by fishermen. They could see them dotting the lake, quite motionless, some among the reeds close to the bank, others far out in the middle. From every boat projected several rods and the silhouettes of the fishermen stood clearly against the light background of the surface of the lake.

"Looks fine, doesn't it?" said Andrei.

Yasha glanced at his watch and urged him on—it was getting on for nine, they would be late, the girls would have drunk everything up, it wouldn't be any fun.

"I've brought this as a stand-by," he said, showing them the neck of a half-litre bottle of vodka that he had in his pocket. "So we'll not be left high and dry."

Nikolai stole a worried glance at Andrei. Obviously, that bottle in Yasha's pocket wasn't going to please him. But Andrei went on smiling as brightly as ever and talked to Yasha in the friendliest of tones.

It was an easy walk. The narrow path followed the shore of the lake. In places it ran along the water's edge, in others it climbed up abrupt cliffs. Honeysuckle bushes in full flower clung to the steep slopes and in the grassy patches between the hillocks grew whole clumps of tall campanulas with large bell-like flowers. Whistling as he plucked the flowers, Andrei soon had a large handsome bouquet.

"How's that?" he said, binding the stalks with a pliant willow-twigg. "Take it, Nik, I'll pick another bunch."

Yasha watched Andrei's every move with curiosity. What made this smart fellow from Moscow want to pick flowers? Why was he clambering up the slope after the brightest and biggest flowers, not caring a damn for his white shoes?

Yasha saw the point of the flowers only later when Andrei presented them with his compliments to the girl who was giving the party. The girl, blushing at the unexpectedness of the gift, did not know what to do with the flowers and stood in the middle of the room clutching them to her chest. But here Yasha displayed his imagination and his gallantry; picking up a bucket, he ran off to the well and put both bouquets into water.

There were practically only girls at the long table covered with odd table-cloths. They were all nicely dressed in silk frocks with their hair done prettily. A few boys sat in a bunch at one end of the table. They had obviously put away a good deal of the ale, for their faces were flushed and their greeting to the new-comers was not exactly polite.

"Oh, it's you, Milovidov. On the prowl after our girls again, eh?" one of them shouted. For some reason he had kept his cap on. "Forgotten the way you were thrown out last time?"

"He's not forgotten," said another. "This time he's brought reinforcements. Well, you'll not scare us, there are plenty of us."

"We didn't come to scare you," said Andrei, showing his white teeth in a smile. "And we didn't come to insult your girls, we came to have a dance and enjoy ourselves."

Andrei, apparently, had decided to conquer all the girls present that evening. He sat down at once beside his hostess and called on everybody

to drink to her health, happiness and beauty. She was, actually, a very pretty grey-eyed girl with long braided tresses piled on the top of her head into a crown.

Supper was soon over—the famous home-brewed ale turned out to be somewhat disappointing, and only Yasha went on swilling it down and praising it to the skies. The girls put on a record and the first pair started shuffling near the table. There was little room for dancing. Andrei suggested pushing the table up against the wall.

"We haven't finished yet," said the boy in the cap fiercely. "Are you trying to make yourself a nuisance?"

"It won't bother you in the slightest. You'll be more comfortable, as a matter of fact. You'll be able to sit in the corner and nobody will get in your way."

The girls danced with each other, and so did the boys. Andrei was the only exception. He invited his hostess to dance first, then he danced with every other girl in turn. Nikolai was no dancer; he took up a place near the gramophone and changed the records, choosing the ones that were least scratched and worn.

"Nikolai," shouted Yasha across the room. "What are you sitting there for like an old crock. Come and join us."

Yasha was well under the weather by now. There was a mean look in his eyes, his voice had acquired a truculent ring, he waved his hands freely. He was beginning to feel that his self-esteem had been wounded by someone, that he was being pushed into the background. Who by? By that editor, of course, who was having such a success with the girls.

Swaying slightly, he got up and abruptly stopped the gramophone.

"We'll dance a foxtrot," he announced and chose another record. "The polka's only fit for the nursery..."

The old record began wheezily. Yasha grasped his hostess' hand and set off with slinky, cat-like steps. The boy with a cap on drew another girl to him and took the floor, too, trying to follow Yasha's steps as closely as he could.

The room was stuffy and Andrei flung open the windows. Outside, on a bench below the window, sat three girls who had not been asked to the party. They were not dressed up like the other girls but they were in a happy mood as they sat there with their arms over each others' shoulders, singing something quietly.

"May I join you, girls?" asked Andrei, leaning out of the window.

"Yes, do, if you're not afraid of mosquitoes," one of the girls replied. She wore a kerchief round her head pulled down to her brows. "The mosquitoes in this place are something awful. They're enormous fierce things. Red as camels."

"I don't suppose they'll gobble me all up." Andrei vaulted out of the window. "And if they do, well, there's nobody to waste any tears over me."

He sat down on the bench and looked at the girls with interest. They were very young, more like school girls. They told him they were born and bred in the factory settlement, and that their parents worked as stone polishers and cutters. They'd been to the local school and were now employed at the factory. They didn't like it there, though—it was monotonous, day in, day out, they polished the same sort of stones to be cut up for mounting in cuff links and brooches.

"It's interesting when you get a really pretty piece of stone," one of them told Andrei. "The trouble is they don't often give us the pretty pieces. They send those to the town. There's a big factory there, with real craftsmen. We've got some, too, but they're old. Young craftsmen don't get a chance at our place."

"I had a lovely stone not long ago," said another girl dreamily. With her hair cut short, she looked like a boy. "I began to polish it and a pattern like a twig came, with little leaves and a kind of flower with petals. I showed it to the old man and he took it away from me—it wasn't for my hands to work up, he said. Where that stone's got to now I don't know. It would have made a lovely brooch."

The wind was soft and sultry. A bright light fell on the girls from the window above. The gramophone indoors went on playing one and the same tune. From under the eaves of a near-by house came the sleepy squeak of nesting swallows. A breath of coolness came from the lake across whose smooth waters stretched a bright moonlit path.

The girls grew silent and listened to the music from indoors where the low voice of some singer told of yellowing leaves that floated silently from a birch tree, of old waltzes and autumn dreams. . . .

Dancing feet thudded on the floor, drowning out the singer.

"Nik," Andrei called, leaning into the room. "What about leaving?"

Nikolai did not even look round. He was sitting with Yasha watching the girls dance, one hand resting on the table, holding an unfinished glass of ale. Yasha was bending towards him, saying something and laughing. That laugh, the expression on Yasha's face and the cloudy ale in the glass were all repulsive to Andrei. Why should Nikolai be listening to Yasha so eagerly? What was that good-for-nothing telling him? Some tripe, of course.

Andrei leaped over the low window-sill into the room.

"Don't you like it here?" said the girl who was giving the party. She looked upset. "It's not our fault if. . . ."

"Oh, everything's fine," Andrei said. "I felt a bit hot, that's all. I wanted some fresh air. Come on, Nik, it's time we got a move on," he said, going up to the table. "It's late, you'll oversleep in the morning."

Nikolai rose uncertainly. Yasha flung his arm over his shoulder and forced him down again.

"It's not our way to be first to leave, Comrade Editor. And don't worry, we shan't oversleep. We're not going to bed at all, we'll carry on till the morning and go straight to work."

"You can carry on till the end of the week for all I care," said Andrei, looking Yasha straight in the eyes. "But that's not our way. Up with you, Nik."

He put his arm through Nikolai's and they walked together up to their hostess. They thanked her for her hospitality and wished the rest of the girls good night. It was dark outside, the bench under the window was empty; the lights had gone out in the neighbouring houses.

Nikolai and Andrei strode along the path. Suddenly a piercing whistle sounded behind them. It was Yasha. Two fingers thrust into his mouth, he stood in the brightly lit rectangle of the open door. The whistle sounded like a threat, but Andrei only laughed and whistled back still louder.

"We win, Nik," he said with satisfaction. "I haven't forgotten how to whistle, you see."

"You certainly haven't. You haven't forgotten anything--how to whistle or dance or flirt."

"And I'm not going to forget," said Andrei, humming a tune.

Nikolai listened for a moment and then unconsciously joined in. The cool breeze fanned his face and cleared his head. From the glades came the cool, fragrant scent of grass; a distant echo repeated the song and bore it beyond the mountains.

Chapter Ten

1

In a few days' time Nikolai's section would be working on the oil workers' order. The technical details of the order had reached Nikolai's desk. The shop's technologist, an engineer not much older than Nikolai himself, noticed him studying the blue prints and said:

"Take a good look at them. Maybe you'll think of some better way of handling the job. Those fellows sit in their offices making plans but you on the job can get a clearer picture of the best way of using the tools and machinery."

Nikolai felt excited, inspired. A new order. Till now his work had not required very much thought on his part. His section went on getting work for which Yuri Sharov had originally been responsible; it was simply a matter of carrying on. Now everything was quite different; now it was up to him to solve technical problems; on his ability depended the fulfilment of an important order.

After a little hesitation he went to see Yuri Sharov. Yuri was still very much involved in fitting up his future workshop and he ran his eye over the blue prints somewhat carelessly, adding that the job looked pretty straightforward. He congratulated Nikolai on having got the order:

"It's always terribly interesting when a new job comes along. All kinds of unexpected things crop up; you discover new ways of doing things."

"D'you think the technologists' work is to be relied on?" asked Nikolai.

"That'll all come clear when you're actually working on the order. My advice is not to rely too much on anybody. . . ."

Yuri was called away; he hurried off, promising to drop in on Nikolai during the evening. Nikolai went back to his section. He was unable to apply himself properly to the order that day; all kinds of small, pressing questions distracted him. So after work he went to a quiet corner and sat there for a long time, working out in his mind how to distribute the work. He expected Yuri to come; but it was not Yuri but Dusya who appeared.

"Ah, there you are. I've been looking everywhere for you. . . ."

Nikolai was glad to see Dusya though he knew she could not help him at all.

"Why don't you ask your shop manager?" she asked when Nikolai had told her of his qualms. "He'll help you. He always helps young engineers."

Nikolai, however, did not want to ask Kovalev for help.

"Oh, I'll work it out for myself somehow," he said casually. "I don't want to bother him with a little thing like this."

"Little thing! But this is an important order," Dusya said reproachfully.

She reminded him about the oil workers' letter, and that the Comsomol had pledged itself to see the order was delivered early; now that pledge had to be fulfilled.

"Both the foundry and the forge have finished their work a week ahead of programme. The other welders and I have promised to save ten days. Now everything depends on the machining. The Comsomol committee has asked me to organize a discussion on the new order in your section. Could we hold it after work tomorrow?"

"Yes," said Nikolai. "I don't know whether I'll have everything ready in time, though."

"Go and talk to Kovalev, I tell you. He hasn't gone yet. I saw him sitting in his office. And do be ready with your plan of work tomorrow. After the meeting we'll go for a row on the lake. Vasya's getting a boat from the old man tonight. He'll row it over to our side."

Nikolai, however, did not go to Kovalev. He went on poring over the blue prints till late at night but was able to add nothing of his own, and on the next day he awaited the opening of the discussion with trepidation.

The day went badly from the beginning. Yasha turned up to work nearly an hour late. This he explained by saying he had been to the polyclinic; he had a slip to prove it. But he did not produce the slip, and Nikolai knew very well that Yasha had not been to the polyclinic but had simply overslept and then had a drink or two; his breath gave him away.

The right thing to do would have been to refuse to let Yasha work that day, but this Nikolai did not do. As a result, Yasha spoiled a casting and an unpleasant conversation with the foreman of the technical control department ensued. Yelena Protasova and two older turners looked at Nikolai disapprovingly. It left him in no doubt that in their opinion he ought to give Yasha a severe reprimand.

They must think he had been drinking with Yasha, thought Nikolai. Well, let them. Of course, Yasha was to blame, but a reprimand was not by any means the best way of educating people.

Nikolai felt certain that Yasha's conscience would give him a twinge and that he would do his very best to make up for his conduct. And, actually, Yasha worked well throughout the afternoon and did better than many others.

"Yasha Milovidov never lets a pal down," he whispered to Nikolai. "You help me, I help you, that's what real friendship means...."

The whole day shift stayed for the discussion on the new order. There were also Stoletov, Kovalev, Dusya Syurtukova—from the Comsomol committee—and Vanya Poperechny—for the *Tribuna*. Their presence surprised and worried Nikolai. Why had they all turned up? Were they afraid the young foreman would not be able to handle the new order? Or was his section getting the most important work to do?

Nikolai felt so confused and alarmed that he had not thought out his speech properly when Dusya gave him the floor. He stood up and with eyes averted, mumbled a few phrases about the importance of the order: everyone must realize his responsibilities, they must exert every effort,

they must not be daunted by difficulties. Then, sensing that this was not the sort of talk the workers expected of him, he added that the work would be complicated, not like the job they were on at present, and that it would call for the creative initiative of every turner.

"Give people a chance of getting to know the blue prints first, then you can talk about showing initiative," one of the older workers called out. "You've had these blue prints for two days. Why don't you show them to us?"

Yelena Protasova came up to the table, opened a notebook and waited until the room was quiet.

"There's so much wrong in the section that we've got to think hard about that new order," she said. "Best of all would be if we could be shown the blue prints of the jobs that are coming to us. Those blue prints exist and the foreman shouldn't keep them from us."

She cast a reproachful look at Nikolai and he flushed: now Protasova and the other older workers were going to start nagging him and piling on the blame.

"The blue prints were held up in the chief technologist's department," he broke in. "They're preparing for the new order, too."

"Their preparations are one thing and ours are quite another," retorted Protasova. "They do their work and then all kinds of hitches crop up. It'll be too late to come along with corrections when the job's already reached the lathes. You can't shift the blame off yourself that way, Comrade Zhukov. . . ."

Stoletov listened to Yelena Protasova with pleasure. She spoke calmly, and the suggestions she made were sensible. She glanced from time to time into her little notebook where, no doubt, all her ideas had gradually accumulated.

"What we need most of all is to create an efficient, friendly atmosphere in the section. As it is, there's too much gossip going around. . . . Who's responsible for it I don't rightly know. But I have my suspicions," she added, with a nod towards Yasha. "Our new foreman hasn't got to know people sufficiently well; he trusts the wrong people. It's up to us to help him know his people better."

She stepped aside and resumed her seat. Nikolai felt his cheeks beginning to glow again. He looked at the faces of his turners with an uneasiness that he sought to conceal under a studied indifference. They all looked as usual—nobody laughed, nobody looked at him sarcastically. Yasha leaned back on the bench with an exaggeratedly casual expression on his face.

The young turners who followed Protasova spoke briefly about their requirements: one asked to be transferred to another lathe because his present one couldn't run faster, another complained of delays in the sharpening of the tools, a third suggested that all tools should be prepared in advance so that the turners should not waste time running for them during working hours.

"Uncle Vasya helps me a lot," said a shy young girl in a white beret. "He works next to me so I try to learn from him. It'd be a good thing if Uncle Vasya or some other of the older comrades would help us younger ones. Like instructors."

"We have a foreman for that," called Uncle Vasya. "It's he who ought to be helping everyone. . . . Don't count on me any more. I'm going to the new shop."

He was the turner who had been given a flat in the new house. And, though he had got the flat and had the key in his pocket, he was still smarting from his foreman's remarks. He had handed in his notice to Kovalev, asking for a transfer to the new shop, and, although it had not yet been accepted, he did not expect to be in the section for more than a few days.

"What if we ask you to change your mind and stay," said Kovalev. "I'm asking you, so is Nikolai Nikolayevich."

"It's absolutely no good you asking that," said the turner, "it's a waste of time to raise the matter, Arseni Mikhailovich."

He spoke in a tone that convinced Nikolai that however far Kovalev cared to go in humbling himself before the man, he, Nikolai, would not lift a finger to keep him in his section.

No longer listening to what people were saying, Nikolai sat thinking how he would put the section's work in order without the help of people who had such a poor opinion of him, how he would get rid of all the things that were hindering good work at present. Andrei talked about getting authority by deeds. He would earn that authority, he would do things so well that the best workers in the shop would ask to be in his section.

He came to with a jerk when Dusya addressed him at the end of the discussion.

"Have you anything more to say about the order, Nikolai Nikolayevich?"

"Only one thing. We're all very proud that our section has been entrusted with this job. We'll make a good job of it, all right. All the practical suggestions the comrades have made will be taken into account . . . so will all serious criticism. . . . As for the personal grudges, I consider we should pay no attention to them."

"Right you are," called Yasha. "We ought to work and not keep taking offence. Some people have too high an opinion of themselves."

For some reason Nikolai found Yasha's support unwelcome. He noticed how contemptuously Dusya had looked at him and how Stoletov had asked Kovalev something with his eyes on Yasha; how the girl in the white beret who was sitting next to Yasha had edged as far away from him as possible. Yasha was not liked, wasn't respected in the factory. When the meeting broke up and people went home in groups or in twos and threes, Yasha slunk off alone.

"Meet you in an hour. On the bank near the weir," whispered Dusya to Andrei as she left the shop. "We can stay out all night if you like. Coming?"

Andrei had heard that Dusya had a boat and that she had invited Nikolai and Yuri Sharov for a trip. "I invited Lyuba, too, but she doesn't want to come," Dusya told him. "Maybe she'd change her mind if you asked her."

Dusya looked at Andrei curiously. How would he take her hint? Andrei took it well; he said he would try to persuade Lyuba but hadn't much hope.

He dropped in at the Comsomol committee rooms several times, he tried to catch Lyuba on the 'phone in the shops; but she was nowhere

to be found. As a result they had made no plans, and now Andrei found himself sitting with Nikolai in the canteen ordering supper and keeping his eyes open for Lyuba.

They ate in silence. Nikolai felt upset about the meeting: once again that shyness of his had let him down, he'd said nothing when he ought to have spoken. He'd had some ideas but he hadn't expressed them, he hadn't felt sure enough they were right. But one thing he'd decided firmly in his own mind—he would put Yasha on the most difficult job. Let Yasha show how he could work. Nikolai wanted Andrei to question him about the new order, about how the meeting had gone. He suspected that Vanya Poperechny had already passed on to Andrei what the older workers had said.

But Andrei's thoughts were elsewhere. Why didn't Lyuba want to go out with him on the lake? Why did she always find some excuse for turning down his invitations to go out walking or into town together, or even to the cinema?

Maybe she had some admirer that she spent her time with? But who could it be? She often went to town, spent the night there. She went there practically every Sunday. Who did she meet there?

After tea Andrei walked down to the lake with Nikolai. They found Dusya and Yuri Sharov waiting near the boat.

Tucking up her frock, Dusya ran to the boat, jumped in and took the oars.

"I'll row," she said, pushing the boat out towards the weir. "Take your seats, all of you."

With strong adroit sweeps she rowed the boat from the shore. The middle of the lake was still bathed in sunshine, and glowed like molten iron. Nearer the shore the water was blue, then deep indigo and finally, under the trees, quite black. Andrei who was lying in the stern gazed back at the houses. The scents of the forest were wafted to the boat from the shore: the warm scent of pine trees on which the sun had poured all day, the smell of hay, a clammy smell from the marsh. On a hilly rise stood the buildings of the housing estate, lit up by the sun.

Lyuba was there somewhere. What was she doing? Andrei clearly saw her tender smiling eyes, her face sweet as a wild rose. . . . His heart was aflutter. As a distraction he took the oars from Dusya. The boat shot ahead through the gathering dusk. Lights flashed on the high land where the factory and the houses stood.

2

It was Dusya's fault that Lyuba hadn't gone on the boat trip.

Inviting Lyuba she said: "Someone's going to be very disappointed if you don't."

Dusya scanned Lyuba's face, curious to know how she would react. Lyuba was involuntarily taken aback and said coldly: "I don't understand. What're you hinting?"

"Oh, well, if you don't you don't. . . . By the way, wouldn't it be a good idea to call our paper the *Tribune of the Comsomol Committee*?"

"D'you mean it shouldn't print so much about the Comsomol?"

"I didn't say that, did I? It'd be interesting to know what a certain assembly worker who happens to be away thought of the last issue. Wonder if he saw it?"

The hint was too broad to be missed. Lyuba blushed, dropped her eyes and walked off. She dawdled a moment and then, feeling that the colour had left her cheeks, went on, meaning to find out how work was proceeding on the oil workers' order.

Lyuba did not go on the boat trip; to punish herself she spent the whole evening going round the hostels, seeing how the improvements recommended by the Party bureau were being put into effect. But there was nobody in; on such a fine warm evening everyone had gone off somewhere.

On her way home she glanced up at the window of Andrei's room. It was dark; so they hadn't come back from the lake yet.

"What do I care whether they're back or not?" Lyuba murmured. She felt annoyed with herself. They could row the whole night for all she cared.

But next morning she was impatient to find out how Andrei had taken her absence. Andrei, however, as if to spite her, did not drop in at the committee room. Thinking up a pretext for a conversation—that the paper was not taking enough interest in seeing that spare-time activities were properly organized in the hostels—she set off for the *Tribuna* office. But Andrei was not there.

"He's gone round the shops," Vanya told her. "Perhaps I can help you."

"No, thanks. I'll ring later."

She rang several times and at last found Andrei in. He told her that he would come over at once. He sounded delighted.

"Pity you didn't come with us yesterday. It was so lovely on the lake. Maybe you'll be free tomorrow evening."

But Lyuba declined. She had to drive to town to return the car her father had lent her for a week—a week that had turned into over a month.

"Splendid," said Andrei. "Will you take me with you? Oh, please do, Lyuba."

Lyuba did not need pressing. She agreed at once, and told Andrei to be outside the Stalingrad at seven sharp the next morning—a Sunday.

Shortly before sunrise, when a heavy dew still lay on the grass, Lyuba hurried to the garage. The small dark-blue Moskvich stood in a corner, right up against the wall; dusty tip-lorries and other factory vehicles blocked the way out. The Moskvich looked forlorn and quite unprepossessing.

So there you are, thought Lyuba as she pushed between the lorries. How on earth am I going to get you out of here?

She took a rag and polished the car's dusty body. The sunshine danced on the lacquer.

The rag soon became dirty and only smeared the dust. And Lyuba so much wanted to reach the Stalingrad with the car looking its best. She took a bucket from one of the lorries, filled it to the brim and, taking care not to spill any water on her dress or white shoes, carried it carefully to the Moskvich.

"No sense in washing it that way," said a young man in dark overalls, appearing from behind a lorry. "Drive into the yard and we'll have the hose on it."

"How am I going to get it there?" Lyuba asked sharply. "Fly it?"

She wrung out the rag, wiped the wind-screen, then polished it with

a crumpled newspaper and got into the car to see whether the glass was clean. It was as transparent as a mountain stream. Glancing through it, Lyuba saw the man walking towards the doors.

So he was going to leave her in this trap. She'd have to find the garage manager and ask for help. . . .

She slipped out of the car and went on with her polishing. Suddenly she heard an engine spring to life in front of her. Quiet at first, it soon filled the whole garage with its roar; then a lorry moved. And then lorry after lorry pulled out of the garage, a way began to be cleared in front of the Moskvich and finally the clay-smeared back of the tip-lorry immediately before the car's bonnet shot forward. The young man leaned out of the driver's cabin, waved his hand and beckoned to Lyuba to follow him.

Lyuba rinsed her hands quickly under the tap, sat behind the wheel and scanned her face in the driving-mirror. Everything was in order: her hair, with which she had taken a lot of trouble, was none the worse, her eyebrows were neat, her face looked fresh and clean. The car moved smoothly from the half light of the garage into the bright sunshine and out of the factory yard through the wide-open gates.

The sun shone straight into Lyuba's eyes. She put on dark glasses, though a glance in the driving-mirror was enough to make her decide to take them off before she reached the Stalingrad. She could see the white building in the distance, its windows glistening in the sunlight and Andrei standing on the edge of the pavement.

"I've been here half-an-hour," said Andrei as he took his place beside Lyuba. "I was beginning to think you'd gone without me. . . . I say, you do look pretty today," he added with a glance at her. "Stunning."

Lyuba smiled and held her tongue. She drove with assurance, her small sun-burned hands resting lightly on the wheel, her eyes on the road. She blew the horn loudly not only at pedestrians but at every cat, goat or chicken that strayed on to the road. She carefully avoided every pot-hole and bump.

"If Dad finds the least thing wrong with the car, I'm in for it," she admitted to Andrei. "He's awfully careful and likes others to be too."

She explained how her father had bought the car. He'd been given a bonus at the factory for an invention; first, he'd wanted to get a motor boat, but he'd given in to Lyuba and her brother and bought this car. Soon afterwards, however, her brother bought himself a motor bike and lost all interest in the car.

"So the car's really mine," said Lyuba. "All the same we call it Dad's. He lets me have it for driving into town and for trips, but I've got to keep it in order."

"Sounds as if you're a bit afraid of your father." Somehow, Andrei felt pleased that Lyuba took her father's wishes into account.

"I am, a bit," said Lyuba. "He's pretty strict with us. He's a fitter like Dusya Syurtukova's father, only *he's* got a soft heart and Dad's is like a piece of flint."

Before long they saw the small dark tower of a fire station rising on the high ground before them; an old church with thick poplars in front of it flashed by; the car ran along a straight cobbled road. There were two women waiting for a bus, with big baskets of vegetables between them.

The white curtains in the windows of the houses were drawn—people were not yet up this Sunday morning and only the dogs were awake, dashing from the gates at the car and trotting back with lazy barks.

The old village was soon left behind, and now they were running past forest-clad hills. There was an occasional cottage on the roadside but the lanes that ran up into the forest were deserted, obviously used but rarely, for they were overgrown with grass, and young pines and birches were sprouting right up to the verges.

"I'd love to go up one of those lanes and see where it leads to," said Andrei. "We might get to somewhere interesting. . . ."

Lyuba did not reply but the colour rushed to her cheeks. Andrei edged his hand up to hers; the car swerved and almost ran off the road. But Lyuba quickly regained control; a little farther on she noticed a lane that ran into deep forest, and turned into it.

"Move your hand, please," she said. "I can't drive properly."

Her tone was formal but her expression—slightly confused and ill-at-ease—did not match it. Andrei withdrew his hand humbly and stared at the lane ahead as hard as Lyuba was doing. The lane climbed steeply, then made a sudden turn and narrowed to run between the trees; then it reached a bridge of rough logs over a stream.

"Don't you think we'd better ford it?" Andrei asked. "I'll get out and see whether it's all right."

Lyuba, however, did not stop; she resolutely drove down the sandy bank into the water. The car splashed through the stream, reached the other bank and stuck in the sand.

"That's that," said Lyuba, and switched off the engine. "Now we shall have to push."

They stepped out of the car into a quiet world. No sound was to be heard except the murmur of the stream breaking over the stones, the songs of the birds and the chirp of grasshoppers. Huge pines stood motionless on the rocky hill slopes. Not a leaf rustled on the thick bushes besides the stream. A meadow of tall grass, untouched and brilliant with large bright flowers, stretched there.

"We ought to pick some flowers," said Lyuba. "The only trouble is they'll wilt before we got to town."

"We can wrap some damp grass round the stems," said Andrei. "I'll go and pick some."

He was prepared to pick all the flowers in the meadow, to lift the car on his shoulders, to climb the highest tree in order to find out how far they were from the town, to do anything that would please Lyuba. He stood before her, awaiting her command. But no command came.

Lyuba was sitting on a boulder beside the stream. Her eyes were shut as she raised her face to the sun. She looked so lovely that Andrei could not resist bending down and kissing the soft slightly-parted lips.

A blow under the chin sent him reeling several paces back. Lyuba stood before him, fists clenched, ready to deal him another blow.

"What d'you think you're doing?" she said in a low voice, and the lips which had just been parted so tenderly were now closed in a tight angry line. "D'you want another? I warn you, I took boxing lessons once."

"So did I," said Andrei, still in retreat. "But I don't know why you should choose to practise on me!"

"In case you get the idea every girl's ready to fall into your arms."
"I don't want that," Andrei said calmly. "I'm interested only in you, Lyuba."

"And has it occurred to you to ask yourself whether I'm interested in you?" asked Lyuba. Her fists were still clenched.

"You looked so pretty with your face tilted up like that. I couldn't help it."

"Well, good-bye. I'm going to drop you here. You'd better cool your passions by having a bathe. There's a deep pool a bit lower down."

She got back into the car, switched on the ignition and pressed the starter. The car did not move. The back wheels were firmly embedded in the sand; the front ones were wedged up against the steep grassy bank. Andrei watched Lyuba's futile attempts to get the car moving, but offered no help. He hated the idea of her leaving him.

He turned in the direction where Lyuba said he could bathe and walked through the tall grass. He reached a place beyond the bushes where the stream suddenly widened and formed a pool. Stones had been laid to form a rough dam. Over the almost motionless water dark blue moths fluttered; white willow-down floated on its surface. On the other side of the pool stretched a low sandy bank, but where Andrei stood the bank was steep and grass-clad.

He picked up a long stick and measured the depth. It did not touch bottom. Andrei stripped to his shorts and dived in. The water felt icy cold as he went under. He swam a little but soon found himself in shallows. The water was warmer there; the sun reached down right to the sandy bed of the pool.

Andrei floated on his back, listening for the sound of the car's engine. But he heard nothing except the buzz of a gadfly that was circling over his exposed shoulders.

"Andrei! Andrei! Where are you?"

It was Lyuba. She sounded some way off.

Then her voice drew nearer and he caught glimpses of her dress through the bushes. The bushes parted and there she was on the bank.

"Why didn't you answer?" she asked, catching her breath. "I was beginning to think you'd got lost."

"I decided to drown myself but it's not deep enough here," said Andrei, splashing with his feet.

Lyuba sat down on the grass, tucking her feet under her. She looked worried but not in the least angry. Glancing at her watch, she said that the car was well stuck and that they would have to get help.

"Looks as if we'll have to walk back to the main road and ask a lorry driver to come up here. That's enough of enjoying yourself, Andrei," she added, sounding slightly vexed. "Come out, please, and don't let me have to walk to the road by myself."

But Andrei would have none of this. They could shift the car themselves.

"That sardine tin of yours isn't going to beat a couple of sportsmen boxers too! It'd be a disgrace."

He clambered on to the bank, picked up his clothes and crossed the meadow. The tall grass tickled his legs, the gadfly was still after him, trying to sting his bare back, the sun was rapidly drying his wet hair.



Lyuba walked beside him, telling him how she had tried to get the car out by putting it into reverse but that the wheels had only sunk in deeper.

"We'll have to try and dig her out," she said. "If only we had some planks or branches to put under the wheels."

They found what they were looking for quite close by—somebody else had run into trouble here, it seemed. Using a length of plank instead of a spade, Andrei dug round the deeply embedded back wheels and slipped branches under them. He broke off some boughs, dragged several flat stones out to the stream and laid them across the sand right up to the bank.

"Get in, Comrade Chauffeur, and drive in reverse while I push."

By their combined efforts they got the car back across the stream and on to firm ground. Lyuba turned it round and drove back along the lane. Now they were ready to resume their journey; but Lyuba reminded Andrei of his promise to gather her a bunch of flowers.

They picked the flowers without a word. In silence Lyuba arranged them in a bunch. In silence Andrei gathered some dock-weed and wrapped

it round the stems. The silence was strained and unnatural. Lyuba was the first to break it.

"Are you still angry with me?" she asked. "That would be funny and silly."

"No, I'm not angry," said Andrei, looking at Lyuba's face bent over the flowers. "But I'm not particularly happy to know that you don't like me."

"Don't like you?" echoed Lyuba, darting a glance at him. "If I didn't like you I wouldn't have asked you to come with me today. . . . But I want to tell you once and for all that I despise girls who let anybody kiss them. A kiss is a sign of great trust, and I'm not one to make light of that trust. That's all I want to say. No, not quite all," she added hesitantly, "I'm sorry I hit you."

"That's perfectly all right," said Andrei glumly, and he opened the door of the car. "Please get in, Comrade Chauffeur."

Before reaching the town, Lyuba stopped at a roadside water-trough and washed the car down again: and when they drove into the yard of the house where her father lived, the Moskvich shone like new: the glass was clean, the blue paintwork was as bright as a corn-flower and from the driving-mirror hung a bunch of flowers.

But all Lyuba's work was wasted; her father was not in. The key of the flat lay in the usual hiding-place—the letter-box.

"I wanted my people to meet you," said Lyuba, "but they've probably gone out for the day."

She opened the front door. The wireless had been left on and filled the flat with muffled sounds; a blackberry tart, still warm from the oven, stood on the kitchen table; the coffee pot stood on the electric ring.

"We'll treat ourselves to what's left," said Lyuba, plugging in the ring. "Watch the coffee doesn't boil over while I go and change."

Lyuba's wardrobe was in two parts—her "factory" clothes and her "home" clothes. She took out a pretty silk frock, slipped it on and slid her bare feet into a pair of high-heeled patent-leather shoes. Glancing into the mirror, she tidied her hair and wondered how to make herself prettier. A flower in the hair, perhaps. . . . But the flowers were in the car.

She turned round and noticed a half-blown rose. Without second thoughts she plucked it and tucked it into her hair. Another glance in the mirror reassured her that the effect was successful. She went to Andrei.

Andrei was still sitting where she had left him. The coffee was on the boil.

"Look at that," said Lyuba, nodding at the jet of steam shooting out of the coffee pot. "I gave you a serious job to do. What are you dreaming of?"

"You," said Andrei, "you're lovely. But, oh so detached—now I don't dare come near you."

"Well, go on sitting where I put you," said Lyuba, taking cups and saucers out. "Let's have some coffee and then go to the park and listen to music. We must make the most of our opportunities now we're in town."

When the time came for Nikolai to start distributing the work on the new order, he ran into trouble straight away.

He had allotted the most difficult work to Yasha Milovidov. Yasha studied the blue print, saw the nature of the job and asked Nikolai to give him something easier or, as he put it, "more worth while." Nikolai refused, whereupon Yasha smirked, picked up the blue print and at the end of the day turned in a completely spoiled part.

It was plain that Yasha had spoiled the job deliberately, but it was impossible to prove. So when Yasha came up and asked with a simper whether the foreman was going to free him from any further work on the order, Nikolai said no, and, moreover, that he expected Yasha to do a perfect job the next day.

Nikolai told nobody about this incident—not even Andrei. Andrei learned of it when he noticed that Nikolai's section was at the bottom of the list in the progress report. As soon as he saw this he hurried to Nikolai.

Nikolai met him truculently and told him that all the trouble was due to initial difficulties in organization and that these would be overcome in no time.

"Put anything you think necessary about me in the paper," Nikolai said drily. "In our shop wall-newspaper I was shown sitting on the back of a tortoise. You could repeat that highly original symbol in the *Tribuna* . . ."

It occurred to Nikolai that a copy of the *Tribuna* might fall into his mother's hands, for Andrei went on sending a copy of each issue to Moscow. His mother had written to tell him how she and Andrei's father read the paper and tried to picture the way their sons were living from its contents.

With some irritation Nikolai thought about his father. Were it not for that letter of recommendation he could have gone to the shop manager, spoken frankly to him and asked for help with those things he could not manage himself. But that letter had spoiled everything: Kovalev would think he wanted a favour.

He came back from work that day feeling very upset. He tried to keep his mind off shop; but it was no good, he kept seeing that ugly part Yasha had spoiled, and with it the angry face of Yelena Protasova, and Dusya's sarcastic smile, when she saw the caricature of Nikolai on the tortoise.

He could not stop thinking of Yasha. He must go to look for him at once and thrash the matter out with him. He would tell Yasha he would no longer cover up his faults and would, in fact, do all he could to expose them. It would be a different matter, of course, if Yasha acknowledged his faults and made an effort to keep up the honour of the section.

However, Yasha was not so easily found. He was not home—a young woman with a baby in her arms told him that he had gone off without saying where. The woman's face looked worried. Over her shoulder Nikolai saw on old man—her father, probably—looking at him with disapproval. So you're one of my son-in-law's pals, that look seemed to say. A little boy with a Young Pioneer tie, who was watering the flower-beds,

also looked at Nikolai truculently. Yasha's brother, perhaps, or the brother of his wife.

"Have a look for him near the pub," the lad yelled after Nikolai in a high shrill voice. "He went to get something to freshen himself up. Needed it after last night's boozing."

Yasha was not in the pub but in the garden outside the factory, basking in the sun. Catching sight of Nikolai, he removed a green leaf that he had laid over his nose, sat up on the bench and gleefully invited Nikolai to sit beside him. He had got rid of his hang-over and felt jovial, in fact.

"Aha, the foreman! My humble and respectful greetings," he cried. "Don't be surprised at the leaf. It's just a bit of dock-leaf. I put it over my nose not to get burned. A little lady I know taught me that."

Nikolai did not sit down. He cast a morose look at the light-hearted Yasha. He did not want to sit down there where people might pass by; he preferred to talk to Yasha somewhere more secluded, where there were no witnesses.

Yasha, however, did not want to leave the garden. He sprawled on the bench and put the leaf back over his nose. He was dressed to kill: light grey trousers with a knife-edge crease, well polished shoes, a dazzling white silk shirt. His closely-shaven cheeks were free from scratches or bruises. He smiled. He felt fine. He wished no man ill. He was even ready to do somebody a good turn.

"Sit down," he said, invitingly. "Or is it too hot for you here? We can go into the shade, if you like. Let's have some beer; they've got a new barrel in the pub. On ice."

But Nikolai did not want to drink. He suggested a walk in the park. Yasha threw away his leaf and rose from the bench.

"Anything you like, to please a friend," he said. "I put friendship before anything else in the world."

Yasha wanted to keep the conversation at this elevated level. He would like to have spoken of friendship, of self-sacrifice, of devotion. He flung his arm over Nikolai's shoulder, humming a tune.

"Oh, Nik, Nik. If you only knew how I feel."

Nikolai wrenched himself free.

"There's no point in letting everybody see you're tight," he said angrily. "I'm not going to help you keep on your feet."

Yasha's face clouded. Thrusting his hands in his pockets, he stood stock-still, like a wild beast about to spring, and blocked Nikolai's path.

"If you were drunk I'd not only help to keep you on your feet, I'd carry you on my own back. You're friends only when it suits you."

He spoke mildly but an angry spark burned in his eyes and there was a spiteful smile on his lips. Nikolai felt like letting out at him, but he restrained the impulse.

"I'm not going to have a scene with you in the middle of the square," he said. "Let's go to the park."

They walked together through the streets, meeting various people they knew. Nikolai felt the disapproving looks. Fine friends! One of them already reeling, the other half seas over to judge by that red face of his. It was shameful, but Nikolai kept on walking beside Yasha.

In the park Yasha dropped on to the grass beneath the trailing branches of a birch tree. The elbows of his white shirt were immediately stained with green. Nikolai thought of the young woman with the baby

in her arms; she would have to wash that shirt. Somehow the sight of those green patches heightened Nikolai's aversion to Yasha. He sat down on a tree-stump a little way off.

"It's nice here," said Yasha with a contented sigh as he settled down on the grass. "Why don't you lie down, Nik? The grass feels so soft and cool. Like being at home on a sofa."

But Nikolai had not come to rest but to have it out with Yasha. He went straight to the point: was Yasha going to work so that the section could pull itself up from the bottom place or not? Nikolai was on edge but managed to keep himself under control. He spoke in a matter-of-fact voice, and this disarmed Yasha.

"D'you want to know what I think?" said Yasha. "All right. I think we ought to drop the order. What are we going to get out of it? Let Yuri handle it. He likes to lick the management's boots. We ought to take on something lighter. There are some easier orders, I know."

Warming to his subject, Yasha sat up and grasped his knees. Nikolai again noticed the green stains on the shirt-sleeves. He turned his head away so as not to have to look at them.

"I don't know what the others would say if we dropped that order," he answered drily. "They all voted for taking it on. They're all doing their best. It's a matter of honour for them."

"I don't care a damn what they think," Yasha broke in. He had failed to notice Nikolai's tone. "You're the foreman; it's for you to decide. Think of yourself, of what's good for you. What's a fellow want out of life, after all? Decent clothes to wear, a good time with something to drink, and a girl of his own. That's all that matters."

Yasha declaimed his philosophy of life with enthusiasm. It was not a complicated philosophy but its realization required money; hence, Yasha had to work, to work enough to get money for everything. For that his work had to be "worth while" not something he had to rack his brains over.

"People tell me I don't do anything to improve production. But I'm not against improvements. No, not at all—when they're in my own interest. But when I hear talk about the honour of the section or about putting the interests of the state first, then I'm against improvements. Who starts all that talk? Characters like Nazarenko. For him the chief thing is the honour, so he does his best for the state. What I say is the state's rich enough without Nazarenko's help. The state's got plenty and it's not going to feel any the poorer because Yasha Milovidov earns a bit more. For me an odd thousand roubles is money, but for the state it's a mere flea-bite. I want a quiet life, I don't like worries; they don't do anybody any good."

And to emphasize his desire for tranquillity, Yasha rolled back on to the grass and shut his eyes. He looked like a big cat that has grown skinny from its antics on the tiles and is being stroked by a soft-hearted owner who gives him the daintiest morsels, not realizing that he is only a parasite.

"What a rotter you are," Nikolai muttered, unable to conceal his contempt and hate. "A real rotter." He stood up. He felt like gripping Yasha by the scruff of the neck and dragging him out of the shade of the birch tree, out of the park. What right had Yasha to use that birch tree's shade, that park, the very air that decent people breathed?

But Yasha, apparently, did not appreciate the way Nikolai felt on these matters. He opened his eyes, stretched and asked: "Who are you getting at? Me? Is that all the thanks I get for my friendly advice?"

Nikolai's expression boded nothing but ill for Yasha: his brows were furrowed, his lips closed in a tight line, his eyes glared with anger. He stood ready for a fight: fists clenched, elbows swinging freely at his side, feet firmly planted.

Still smiling, Yasha suddenly leaped up, taut as a spring. He raised his fists and lunged at Nikolai who returned the blow with one at Yasha's chest. Now they were really fighting. Yasha's arms threshed the air as they tried to reach Nikolai's face; he went on smiling as though everything was a friendly joke.

Someone came up behind Nikolai and grasped him by the elbows.

"Let go," shouted Nikolai without turning round. "Let me give the swine what he deserves."

He tried to wrench his elbows free but the grip on them was firm. Yasha looked taken aback. At last Nikolai turned his head; the man who held him so firmly was Stoletov. On the path two little boys looking exactly alike in blue shorts stood with fishing-rods on their shoulders. They were watching the scene with intense interest.

"That's enough," said Stoletov calmly. "Come along with me."

He freed Nikolai's elbows, slipped an arm through his, and led him to the path.

"We're going to the lake and you're coming too," he said to Nikolai. "Let's take this path. We're not likely to meet anybody this way. Doesn't do for a foreman to be seen the way you look."

Nikolai glanced back. Yasha stood leaning against the birch tree, wiping his face with his sleeve. Now there were other stains on the sleeve—red stains.

H'm he'd managed to land a few, thought Nikolai. Yasha had something to remember him by.

Stoletov led him to the lake along a narrow path. In front, glancing round from time to time, walked the twins. The floats that bobbed from the rods over their shoulders were home-made, just pieces of cork with black thread instead of cut-gut. Difficult to imagine anyone catching a real fish with that tackle. But the little boys looked happy enough; it wasn't often they went fishing with their Daddy. They seemed to like Nikolai; their eyes were full of hero-worship when they looked at him.

Funny, but those glances the boys threw him made Nikolai feel happy. Stoletov walked on in silence, his arm still through Nikolai's. He seemed to know the narrow shady path, for he walked on with assurance.

When they reached the lake, he told the boys to climb to the top of a high boulder that jutted into the water some way off.

"The fish always bite best there," he told them. "Go and sit on that rock and keep quiet. If you chatter the fish'll get the wind up and you'll not catch one." He handed one boy a tin of worms and the other a basket for any fish they caught. Then he sat down on the sand in the shade of a bushy alder tree. The boys went off rather reluctantly to the rock.

"It'd do you good to have a swim. You can rinse your shirt out too,"

Stoletov said to Nikolai. "Wait a minute, I'll get you some soap. We've got a cache for such things here."

He parted the bushes and brought out a tin soap-box.

"Here you are. But go a little farther along the bank or you'll drive all the fish away from the kids."

Nikolai kicked off his shoes and walked to the edge of the water. Then he slipped behind a bush, stripped and began to wash his shirt. The stains were hard to get rid of; not sparing his hands, he rubbed the shirt hard with soap and sand.

"The sun'll look after the rest," he muttered, and ran into the water. As he swam and let the waves slap against his face, he felt his swollen nose hurt. His feet found bottom and he tried to see his reflection in the water, but the wind was rippling the surface too much. By feeling his nose he could tell that it really had grown bigger. How was he going to turn up for work the next day, he wondered, and felt ashamed. He would have to put a cold compress on it. Wasn't that the best cure for bruises?

Returning to the bank, he took his partly-dried shirt, dipped it in the water and pressed it against his nose.

"Too late now," he heard Stoletov say.

"Do I look awful?" he asked.

"Pretty bad," said Stoletov. "Your nose is swollen and you've got a real beauty of an eye. Never mind, you'll live to see a better day."



He laid a hand on Nikolai's shoulder, drew him to his feet and led him to the little bay where the children sat perched on their rock. Nikolai spread his damp shirt to dry on the bushes and sat down beside Stoletov on the sand.

"Now tell me what it was all about," said Stoletov.

The little boys had long scampered off home with a few fish; but Nikolai still went on talking to Stoletov. He had not said anything about

Yasha yet, and did not really want to. He was talking about his work in the turnery, about his quarrels with the older workers, about the mess he had made of things so that he was at the bottom of the list in the paper.

"You're a friend of the editor's, aren't you?" Stoletov asked.

"Yes, we've known each other since we were kids."

"Didn't you feel sore when he wrote that your section was last?"

"Of course not," said Nikolai, perplexed by Stoletov's question.

"After all, we were last, weren't we?"

"And what happened between you and Milovidov?" asked Stoletov.

"What was there between you that could only be settled by fighting?"

Nikolai avoided answering that question. He said that the fight was his fault, entirely his fault. As for the reasons, well, they would be removed.

"That's good." Stoletov did not press for details but told Nikolai that he should not antagonize those workers who were his senior in age and experience.

"It'll save you a lot of trouble if you get on better with them," he went on. "The quicker you sort yourselves out the better you'll work. I know it's not pleasant to have to admit a job you've been given is too much for you. But it's even less pleasant to come a cropper on that job. You have a first-class, thoroughly experienced engineer as your shop manager. What's more, in your own section you've got someone you'd find hard to match anywhere—I mean Yelena Protasova. If you find you can't get on with anybody, consult her about it. She'll not take advantage of it. She'll give you some good advice, I'm sure."

How could he consult Protasova? Why, she knew how close he was with Yasha and blamed him for it. She probably thought him no better than Yasha.

"And now get dressed and come and have dinner with us," said Stoletov. "We'll probably have to eat my boys' catch."

A swollen nose and a crumpled shirt you'd just washed in the lake and, incidentally, torn during the process, were not the most suitable get-up for paying your first visit to people you didn't know, but the Stoletovs seemed so glad to meet him that Nikolai soon felt quite at his ease. The only time he was put out was when Ivan Konstantinovich came to table with his severe expression, his scrupulously clean white jacket which looked as if it had just been starched, his unhurried careful movements.

The old man did not reply to Nikolai's greeting.

"Father, we've a guest," Varya said loudly. "Engineer Nikolai Nikolayevich Zhukov."

Ivan Konstantinovich looked hard at Nikolai, smiled and put out a hand.

"An engineer and so young," he said. "I'm sorry, I didn't notice you. I thought you were some pal of the youngsters."

Vanya and Demyan looked at Nikolai with wonder and admiration—what a fight he'd put up. He'd drawn blood. And there was Grandad taking him for the next-door-neighbour's boy. Grandad was beginning to see so badly; really, he ought to have a new pair of spectacles. The twins tried to sit nearer to Nikolai but their mother pointed to the other end of the table and Nikolai sat down beside Stoletov.

After dinner Stoletov picked up the telephone and asked someone whether he was free.

"You are? Splendid. Perhaps you'd drop in for a little. I've got somebody you know with me. He wants your advice about something."

A few minutes later Kovalev entered the garden. He wore a white shirt and gym shoes, and held a new volleyball under his arm. Putting the ball on the bench, he began to walk up and down the path with Stoletov and Nikolai. The three of them talked for a long time. Ivan and Demyan sat patiently on the bench each side of the ball. It was a beautiful ball, the leather was so fine, it would be lovely to kick about.

Ivan's elbow accidentally touched the ball which rolled on to the grass. And there it lay until Demyan stuck out a leg and gave it the gentlest little kick with the tip of his shoe. The ball began to roll down the slope, followed by the little boys. Perhaps it would have stopped rolling had not some stones, flown from the feet of its pursuers, speed it on its way.

"We ought to have asked them," said Demyan.

"What for? It just rolled off, didn't it?"

"Nobody meant to touch it."

"Let's call Volodya. He'll be at the gate."

They didn't have to call Volodya. He appeared of his own accord, picked up the ball and dashed with the twins to a space where two birch trees served as goal-posts. Volodya ran to the goal, booted the ball, and the game began.

The visitors were not to be seen when the boys returned home. "So you took the ball? What are you thinking of?" said their mother.

"It rolled away by itself," said Demyan, turning a pair of innocent eyes on her. "We just caught it up and played with it a bit..."

"Where's Nikolai Nikolayevich, Mummy?" asked Ivan.

"He's gone home. Now, if you hadn't taken the ball, he'd have stayed and played with you. Now they've all gone away. I'm going out too in a minute. Off to bed with you."

The boys went on to the porch. Varya hurried after her husband. He had gone to the park where there was a band performance, dancing and a concert. Varya could see him standing among a large group of young people near the dance floor.

"Here I am," he called to her. "Come and rescue your old man. The girls say I've got to dance. They just don't believe I can't."

"It's true, he can't," said Varya, slipping her arm through her husband's. "I've tried to teach him but it's no good. We'll sit down and watch you girls dance."

They sat on a seat near the band; the young people streamed on to the floor. The band was playing a waltz; Varya watched the couples glide past them, girl dancing with girl, boy with boy.

"Why do they dance like that?" Varya asked. "Why don't the boys invite the girls to dance with them?"

"They're mere kids, really," said Stoletov. "Still a bit bashful.... Now, there's a couple for you, look."

He nodded towards Lyuba and Andrei. Andrei held his partner firmly and kept his eyes fixed on her up-tilted face as they waltzed together. There was a tender, submissive, devoted look on Lyuba's face—a look quite unusual for her. But then Andrei said something and her expression changed immediately; she tossed her head and averted her eyes while a stubborn look came to her face.

The band stopped, then plunged into a mazurka.

"Go and ask Dusya for a dance. I want to sit this one out," said Lyuba and made for one of the benches.

Andrei invited Dusya, and they began to dance. It seemed to Andrei that whereas the waltz had been far too short, the mazurka was going on for ever. They had circled the floor many times; someone had come to stand right in front of the bench where Lyuba sat so that Andrei could not see what she was doing. Surely Dusya must be tired of dancing? The band played with more and more fire, the tempo mounted to a climax—these must be the final bars. Andrei steered Dusya round the floor nearer to Lyuba's bench. The music ended, the dance was over. Dusya dabbed at her cheeks with a handkerchief.

"Thank you," said Andrei, and swung round at once to the bench. Lyuba was not there, only Nikolai and Yuri. He went to look for Lyuba. He looked to see whether she was still on the floor. He eyed every couple. He walked past all the benches around the dance floor. He looked up the near-by paths and into the open-air library; the verandah was deserted; the wind rustled among the newspapers and magazines. Lyuba was nowhere to be found.

From then on, Andrei found everything dull and uninteresting; the music sounded shrill and got on his nerves, the lamps looked unnecessarily gaudy against the green foliage, the lake made the air cold and clammy. Andrei walked out of the park, making a detour to pass Lyuba's window. The window was open; the wind played with the white curtains.

After a few moments of vigil Andrei looked around and threw a pebble at the window. The pebble hit the frame hard, but nobody appeared from behind the curtains. Only a chance passer-by cast him a wondering glance.

Chapter Eleven

1

A meeting had been convened to discuss the work of the young engineers. The chief engineer made his report: so many young qualified workers in the factory as a whole, so many in each shop and so on. Some worked better than average, others worse. Foreman Nikolai Zhukov, for example, was working badly, foreman Yuri Sharov well. It might be better to transfer Zhukov to the lab or to another department; Zhukov's shop-manager, however, was against the idea for some reason and went on experimenting to the disadvantage of output.

Nobody was satisfied with the report. A violent discussion broke out immediately. Some charged the chief engineer with neglecting to provide young engineers with any guidance or with failing to insist that the shop and department managers give that guidance. The chief engineer's report was unworthy of the name—it was nothing but a statistical statement, and that just about summed up his attitude to the young engineers.

"There's nothing wrong with the young people who come to work here," said Syurtukov. "They're eager to work and make themselves useful. The trouble is they've no experience. Now, take Zhukov, the young fellow who's been mentioned this evening. I've had my eye on him since

the day he arrived. Wanted to see how he'd shape. He's a touchy lad. Likes to do everything his own way. So, of course, he makes mistakes—technical mistakes, and what I might call psychological ones. But what do the older comrades do? Just stand by and watch and wonder how the poor fellow's going to manage. If he makes a good job of it, all for the good. If not, then it's the end of him as far as this section's concerned. Hasn't that been your attitude? Instead of going to the lad and asking him if he wants help."

"He can always ask for help himself if he feels he can't manage," said the chief engineer.

"He can. But, don't forget, we're sometimes a bit touchy too, when it's quite unnecessary. I'll give you an example. This is what happened in Zhukov's section. Two turners took offence at something their young foreman did, and went to work in another shop. Said Zhukov had offended them by showing he favoured a fellow of his own age. Trying to wangle a flat for him. So they decide to walk out on him—like the opposition in a bourgeois parliament."

There was general laughter. But one of the turners whom Syurtukov was referring to shouted from the back of the hall: "Why should I bow and scrape before a mere lad like him? 'Specially as he's so partial to bad company. He's too chummy with that Yasha Milovidov."

"And whose fault's that?" Syurtukov was quite calm. "While you were playing the poor insulted man, Yasha was offering Zhukov his sympathy. He wasn't like the older workers; oh no, he was Zhukov's friend. He'd support him. In my opinion a young worker ought to be able to rely on the support of every social organization in the shops. If that were so, these lads with special training would settle down into the life of the factory all the sooner."

Sharov spoke next.

"There's been talk here about young qualified workers not getting enough help," he began. "I want to speak about something else, though. It's this. In my opinion our young people are not sufficiently self-reliant. They're coddled too much, not given enough chance to take the initiative themselves. That's because there's not enough confidence put in them. Because the older people think something like this: 'I've had the same education as any of these youngsters and besides that I've worked so many years in production. I've got the experience and the knowledge of life, so it follows that I'm the one to take the initiative and it's up to the youngsters to put my initiative into practice.' Some of our older comrades, if they don't mind my saying so, forget sometimes that science, especially technical science, is never at a standstill, is always forging ahead. Laws they considered in their student days to be immutable aren't laws any longer."

Both Andrei and the chief engineer were taking careful notes of this speech. Andrei had decided to devote a page of the paper to the problem of young engineers. He would ask Sharov to write the main article. Ask him, too, who else he could suggest. Nikolai ought to write. And later on the factory manager ought to reply.

Budanov came next, his tall figure in marked contrast to Sharov's as he towered in the rostrum. Budanov spoke loudly and calmly without consulting his notes.

"Yuri Sharov need not have asked us older comrades not to take offence at his criticisms," he said. "The right to criticize is not the privilege of any particular age group. And if the young workers criticize the older ones and that criticism is just, then there's not the least reason for anyone to take offence. And Sharov's criticism of the factory management was, by and large, justified criticism."

Several young Communists applauded, but Budanov raised his hand.

"Hold it, comrades. You may not agree with what's coming. I accept as justified many of the factual examples Sharov cited but I don't agree with his conclusions and his generalizations. I disagree that innovations—the desire to break new ground and work with new methods—are a monopoly of youth. We have many old qualified engineers who studied according to what Sharov calls out-dated theories and yet are real innovators. Of course, I'm speaking about those who really keep in touch with life and don't get stale and complacent. . . ."

Budanov paused as if searching for words. From the platform the chief engineer gazed triumphantly at Sharov and the young engineers sitting near him.

"Yes, as I was saying, those who don't get stale and complacent, above all, about themselves," Budanov continued, and he too was looking at Sharov. "We don't want self-satisfaction about the fulfilment of plan; we want a restless determination to improve on today's performance. That ought to be the way for every leader to work, me in the first place."

The hall was stuffy. Someone opened the windows. From out of the darkness floated strains of a brass band playing in the park, girls' voices coming from far over the lake, gusts of laughter and muffled noises from the cinema where a new film was being shown. A short break in the meeting was announced; people went out on to the broad verandah of the club, smoked hurriedly—for the interval was brief—but managed to talk about the vital points that interested them all.

"The discussion's gone off the lines," grumbled Yuri Sharov. "I talked about silly coddling methods and the way I'm not given a chance to take the initiative. Nobody's answered that so far."

"You ought to have given concrete examples," said Lyuba. "Nobody will answer general charges. . . . Incidentally, Yuri, as a committee member you could have raised the question in the Comsomol long ago. Or you could have written to the *Tribuna* about it."

Lyuba glanced at Andrei who was standing a little way off, talking to Syurtukov. She could not hear what they were discussing but by the animated look on their faces she judged the subject to be interesting. She would like to have approached them but after a moment's hesitation left Yuri abruptly and walked in the opposite direction.

Since that incident on their drive to town, Lyuba had not once found herself alone with Andrei. Whether it was by accident or design she could not tell. She had been kept fully occupied with an inspection of the hostels and with drawing up the lists of entrants for the new term of night class.

True, this work meant meeting and talking to Andrei. She was always aware of his presence, she heard his voice, she saw the way his eyes lit up when she spoke to him. But there were always other people present; their meetings were of a strictly business character from start to finish.

Walking to the other end of the verandah, Lyuba kept Andrei in sight. She saw Dusya come up to him and laugh as she told him something. Dusya was dressed in a pretty frock. Vasya, too, looked pleased and proud. They were celebrating their baby son's second birthday and had invited Lyuba to the party. She wondered whether they had invited Andrei too. What had Dusya said to him that made him smile as happily as if he'd been given a present?

Lyuba made up her mind to go and ask Dusya who else was going to be at the party, but the interval ended and she had to hurry back to the platform.

She did not listen to what a young engineer from the designing office was saying. Her eyes, her thoughts were all on Andrei. He was jotting down what was being said, head bent over notebook. Lyuba saw only the top of his head with its glossy dark hair so neatly parted, his forehead and his broad shoulders with the well-fitting blue jacket over them.

Look at me, look at me, her thoughts spoke. Look at me immediately, she repeated like an incantation as she gazed at Andrei. And Andrei stopped writing and raised his head.

Their eyes crossed. Andrei dropped his left hand on to the window-sill. An invisible bond was stretched across the hall. Lyuba sat propping her chin on her hand, her cheeks aflame; she did not even hear the speaker blaming the Comsomol committee for neglecting the young engineers.

Smile at me, smile at me, Lyuba repeated to herself, and looked angrily at Andrei. Smile at me this very minute. . . . And Andrei smiled. Lyuba heaved a deep sigh of relief and only then did she become aware that the speaker was mentioning her by name.

"Comrade Zvonaryeva ought to look into all this."

Look into what? Lyuba tore her eyes away from Andrei; she pressed her palms against her burning cheeks. The young engineer was applauded when he left the rostrum. Obviously, he'd said something important. But could anything be more important than what was going on in her heart at this moment? Could anything mean so much?

The meeting continued. Various people took the floor and gave their views or made suggestions. But Lyuba remained oblivious to it all. She saw only Andrei, she thought of nothing else, she longed for the meeting to end so that she could leave the platform and join him.

Stoletov spoke. But Lyuba was aware of it only because towards the end of his speech Stoletov left the rostrum and stood before the table on the platform, blocking her view of Andrei. Pulling herself together, she heard Stoletov say something about the technical school and the growing need for teachers and the responsibility of the trained engineers for young workers who were studying.

"And in order to teach, one must learn oneself. Technique is always on the move and people can easily fail to notice that they're falling behind. Many forget that it's impossible to give the lead to growing, technically educated people unless they keep up with new technique themselves. Take Zvonaryeva, for instance. She's fine when it's a question of political or organizing work but I fear she's beginning to forget the things she learned in technical school. At any rate, she doesn't try to improve herself in that field. I know many cases of Comsomol secretaries

or members of Comsomol committees showing young people by their personal example that the way to higher technical education is open to all and that it's the duty of young people of today to take that way."

"Then see that we have a branch of the polytechnical institute at the factory," Lyuba said heatedly. "It's easy to talk about studying, but what facilities have we got for technical study?"

"You can do it by correspondence course," shouted Yuri Sharov. "Nobody's going to stop you doing that."

Stoletov however agreed with Lyuba that it would be useful to organize a branch of the polytechnical institute. Several factories had them; lecturers came and gave lectures and ran seminars. What's more, the factory had its people with high scientific degrees; they could take over some of the subjects. The chief engineer would certainly lecture on descriptive geometry. Kovalev could teach mechanics, at least to first-year students. And there were other specialists in the factory who could teach.

Stoletov wound up and returned to his place. Lyuba watched him and tried to avoid Andrei's eyes. She didn't like that bit about her being technically backward. But whose fault was that? She would certainly be studying if she had not been elected secretary of the Comsomol committee.

As she sat with head down, thinking things over, Lyuba failed to hear the motion being read with its amendments and corrections. Suddenly she felt worried and her thoughts grew muddled; she looked up and at once met Andrei's glance. He had moved from the window to the front row and was looking at her hard.

Don't worry, his eyes told her. Everything will be all right. I've been looking at you for such a long time. I'm sorry you look so upset.

That, at least, was what Lyuba read in Andrei's eyes, whatever he may really have been thinking about. She smiled faintly and pushed back a lock that had strayed on to her forehead. Not caring who might see their silent conversation, she returned Andrei's look, keeping her eyes on his even during the voting and trying to raise her arm just as he raised his. And when the meeting closed she simply flew to Andrei. And Andrei came to meet her.

2

The Syurtukovs gave such a splendid party to celebrate little Mitya's second birthday that practically the entire village had to be scoured for crockery, chairs and tables. Grandma Syurtukova first laid a table in the front room, as was right and proper, then she had to arrange for an overflow in the next room, and finally, ask for extra tables to be set up in the orchard behind the house.

Grandma Syurtukova grumbled and said there would not be enough to go round. Dusya might have told her how many she'd invited. So Dusya upped and went to the stores with a shopping bag. A good thing they were open so late. Vasya helped his father-in-law to carry chairs into the orchard and carefully brought out the crockery. An old woman from next door who had been helping Grandma Syurtukova in the kitchen lit the stove again—it looked a certainty that there'd be some more baking and frying to be done.

The guests began to arrive before everything was quite ready, and were made to help: an extension from the kitchen was rigged up in the orchard and a bulb hung from a bird-cherry tree; the girls laid the tables; the boys knocked together a bench out of two thick stumps and a plank. Meanwhile Grandma Syurtukova fumed and fumed—she thought she was going to receive her visitors with the ceremony that the occasion required but instead of that everything was topsy-turvy.

"You might at least have slipped out of the meeting and warned me that you and that daughter of ours had invited the whole factory," she said to her husband. "Making a disgrace of ourselves before everybody, that's what's going to come of it."

As it turned out, though, there was nothing for the Syurtukovs to be ashamed of. There was room for everybody, enough plates to go round and, what's more, plenty of food. And when everybody was seated and little Mitya placed next to his grandfather, Grandma Syurtukova at last calmed down. But then, casting her eyes round the company, she noticed Kovalev was not there and again started scolding Dusya inwardly for forgetting to invite the shop manager.

"Why didn't you ask Kovalev?" she whispered to her husband. "We know him; he's been here several times; and yet you leave him out."

"I didn't have anything to do with that, my dear," said Syurtukov. "The party's for the little boy and it's up to them to choose the guests. Now, when you and I are celebrating our anniversaries, it'll be different. We'll invite our own friends then."

All the guests were young. Valya, who was very near her time, had come. She kept looking at Mitya as if pondering whether she would have a son like that. The poor girl simply did not realize that Mitya was two years old, well past the difficult period, an independent being who could walk and didn't have to be carried in his mother's arms.

Lyuba was sitting next to Valya. Lyuba had brought Mitya a teddy-bear but Mitya did not like it; the bear was big and heavy and had green buttons where the eyes ought to be. Why on earth did they make such toys? She, Valya, could make a better bear than that herself. . . . On the other side of Lyuba sat the editor—so handsome with his dark hair.

Glasses were raised to Mitya's health; and then the guests forgot all about him. Mitya didn't in the least mind, of course; he enjoyed being among so many people and hearing the glasses ring and being allowed to hit his plate with a spoon. He didn't cry to be put in his cot, though it was long past bed time and only because it was his birthday was he being allowed to stay up so late.

The only one who took any notice of him was Valya. When everybody was busy talking, Valya changed her place and came closer to Mitya.

"What teeny-weeny hands the little pet's got," she cooed. "And such lovely thick hair."

Now another guest was looking at the baby—a quiet girl sitting a little apart from the rest. She had a morose expression on her face; there were brown blotches on her cheeks and forehead, and her eyes burned with a dull anger. Not even Mitya's little tricks softened her expression; indeed, the more the little imp played and the more Valya gushed over him, the grimmer the girl look

Who could she be? Valya felt quite worried. You shouldn't look at a baby that way, it might frighten the kid.

Valya felt like telling the girl off but just then she sprang to her feet. Then Valya saw that she too was pregnant.

"Where are you going, Antonina?" called Grandma Syurtukova. "Why, you've eaten nothing."

The girl ran indoors without a word. Just a flash of her dress on the porch and she was gone. Grandma Syurtukova shook her head disapprovingly and turned back to Mitya. Then Valya realized she must be the girl who had tried to drown herself. She worked in the foundry and Valya saw her very rarely about the factory.

It was not surprising that Valya failed to recognize the girl at once, for she had changed greatly: her face had become drawn and looked much older. That's what being friendly with Yasha did to you. Valya sighed and looked at her Vladimir. There he sat, ruddy-cheeked, gay, joking about something with young Nikolai Zhukov, his foreman. If she hadn't had her Vladimir, she might look no happier than that poor girl. . . . Vladimir caught her eye and smiled at her across the table.

"Feeling all right?" he asked. "Not too tired? I'll take you home if you like."

Valya shook her head. She didn't want to go home. She liked it here. Vladimir looked relieved and resumed his conversation with Nikolai.

But Valya slipped away from the table unnoticed and went indoors. She stepped carefully, afraid of stumbling, of doing something to harm "him." "He" was behaving very nicely now, thank you, he wasn't kicking as he had been doing lately.

Antonina was sitting in the dark. Her elbow rested on the windowsill and she was leaning out of the window.

Outside it was very quiet with only the rustle of the bushes in the hedge and the faint sound of a radio in the house opposite. The voices of the people in the yard were barely audible. There was an impression of great emptiness.

"Why did you leave?" asked Valya, walking slowly to the window across the room. "Why are you sitting here all alone?"

Without a word Antonina leaned farther out of the window, as if trying to escape Valya's attention. Valya came right up to her and sat down at her side. In the half-light she could just make out the other's thin sunken cheeks, the straight hair raised from the head with a comb and the faint sparkle of ear-rings.

"Why don't you drop in at the hostel?" asked Valya, settling down comfortably. "D'you know what we've got there now? Carpeting in all the corridors. Makes it ever so much quieter. And there's a new suite in the sitting-room too."

Antonina replied with a shrug of her shoulders, but before Valya had time to comment on her rudeness "he" gave her a kick. Or was it a thump of his fist? A little fist like Mitya's? "He" stirred and then settled down. Valya smiled and turned back to Antonina.

"Why are you so angry with everybody?" she reasoned. "You've only yourself to blame, you know."

The girl turned on her so violently that Valya raised her hands to defend her body. Noticing her gesture, Antonina said with a bitter laugh: "Fraid I'll hurt it, are you? And I'd cut mine out with a knife if I could,

Lying like a snake inside my belly. I've run myself up against the table; I've jumped out of the window, I've done everything I could but it hasn't done any good."

Valya listened to her with horror. Her arms remained folded over her body as if she feared that the girl was going to knife her. But Antonina turned back to the window and stared into the darkness. Someone went by whistling; she drew back and hid behind the curtain.

"Tonya," said Valya timidly, "why doesn't he marry you?"

"Marry me? He can't have two wives at the same time, can he? And he can't get a divorce. So there you are. But he wanted to marry me, too."

She leaned out of the window only to dodge back again as she heard footsteps passing the house. Like a hunted creature, thought Valya. Trying to make away with herself and now wanting the baby to die.

Valya thought of little Mitya. How could anyone think of killing a child like that? A little helpless tender child, a joy to all. . . .

"What made you go with a married man, Tonya?" Valya faltered. "You were breaking up another woman's life. . . ."

"I didn't know and I don't want to know," snapped Antonina. Her tone was so resentful that Valya felt at a loss. Tonya knew that Yasha did not need her, that she was disgraced and unwanted. That was why she had tried to kill herself—to escape from the shame and the grief.

"Listen, Tonya," said Valya firmly. "You oughtn't to be thinking only about yourself or about that awful Yasha. You ought to think about the baby. Don't forget it's got to be taken care of, the poor little fatherless mite. It's not to blame for anything."

Valya felt quite sentimental about this unborn child. Of course no father at all was better than having Yasha for a father, but all the same it was a bad business. The child would be an object of pity, it wouldn't be able to say "I'll tell my daddy" if somebody meant it harm; it would never know a father's caress, so sparingly given but all the more precious for that.

"Don't forget, Tonya, you've a debt to your child that's got to be paid. Instead of cursing it you'll have to earn its forgiveness. You oughtn't to be thinking of how to get rid of it but of how to give birth to a strong healthy baby. I'll hate you for the rest of my life if you do anything to hurt that baby. . . . Maria Borisovna gives lectures for young mothers," Valya went on. "I've been going to them. I'm going to bring up my baby according to all the latest scientific methods. All of us expectant mothers have promised that. No dummies, no swaddling-bands."

She launched forth on a detailed account of the baby-clothes and the number of dainty warm diapers that had to be ready for the baby when it arrived.

"Come to see me. I'll show you everything I've got, and help you to sew."

Valya's manner was full of good-will; she really wanted to help the girl. But Antonina's only response was to flash her burning eyes, spring to her feet and leave the room.

"You're nothing but a fool, Valya," she said from the door. "A hopeless fool."

She slammed the door behind her so hard that the window curtains fluttered. There was a crash in the next room. Antonina must have bumped against the table. Then her footsteps died away. The wicket-gate opened.

with a creak and a running figure flashed past the window. A minute or two afterwards the gate creaked again and Yelena Protasova hurried after Antonina.

Left alone in the dark room Valya was on the verge of tears, so hurt and confused did she feel. Why should Antonina have reproached her like that? She'd been such a quiet, polite girl before. How Yasha had spoiled her character! She'd copied his manners, his very words.

Valya drew near to the window. With a deep sigh she mastered her feelings. Antonina's rudeness meant nothing, after all. It was all the result of grief and unhappiness, the worst unhappiness that can befall a girl. Perhaps she had been wrong to mention the baby. Perhaps it would have been better to have blamed Yasha and opened Tonya's eyes to his faults. Why, the girl still thought Yasha loved her.

Could she, Valya, go on loving Vladimir if all of a sudden she found out he was carrying on with another woman? But then that situation could never arise. Her Vladimir was not capable of doing anything so vile. She was ashamed of the very idea.

A gust of cool wind stirred outside, fanning Valya's face. A cloud hung over the distant mountains. It crept up with a low muttering; pale flashes of lightning threw the line of the mountains into sharp relief. Yet the sky overhead remained clear and starlit. Only a faint scent of rain gave warning of the impending storm. Valya rose in alarm.

Here she was sitting and worrying while a thunderstorm was blowing up. She'd be caught in the rain.

She went out into the yard. The lamp in the tree threw a bright light on to the well-covered table, on to laughing faces. There had been much changing of places while Valya was away, and little Mitya was nowhere to be seen. He must have been put to sleep, for even the baby-chair had gone. Quite a choir had struck up at one end of the table. Dusya was singing the lead—something quiet like a lullaby for her baby.

Valya wanted to get Vladimir to take her home but he was sitting beside Nikolai and both of them were deep in conversation with Yuri Sharov about something. Vladimir, in fact, was so absorbed that he did not notice that Valya had returned. She did not like to interrupt, and, really, now she did not feel like leaving—the cloud couldn't be seen from the yard, the wind didn't reach there, only the very top of the tree rocked a bit. Maybe the storm would pass over. She would stay a little longer. Valya sat down not far from her husband's place.

She cut herself off from the conversation around her and let her thoughts drift. She thought about how she and Vladimir would get their flat in the new house and how all three of them would live there, she and Vladimir and their son. Every morning they would set off to work, leaving the baby in the factory crèche on their way. The crèche was new, a lovely place full of sunshine. The young expectant mothers had been taken over it recently. It was the verandahs that appealed most to Valya—sunny and broad, they could be heated in winter so that the babies could be left there all day.

In the evening she or Vladimir would bring the baby home. The trouble was they hadn't got a cot. There weren't any in the shop. There weren't any chests-of-drawers either, and a chest-of-drawers was something Valya wanted very much, instead of the sort of wardrobe they had

in the hostel dormitory, which wasn't deep enough to let you lay your clothes out properly.

Valya moved close to her husband, laid her head on his shoulder and went on dreaming. Vladimir did not turn away at once from the others but laid an arm over her shoulder; then he turned, smiled brightly at her and stood up.

"Why, you're falling asleep, Valya," he said. "Let's go. It's not good for you to sit there drowsing."

He gave Valya his arm and helped her to her feet. How she liked to be taken care of by him! They walked through the garden gate. Valya was surprised to find that the clouds now covered half the sky and were racing on to the accompaniment of flashes of lightning much brighter than those she had seen from the window.

"We'll manage it," said Vladimir with a glance at the sky. "No good running. You might stumble in the dark."

He took firm hold of Valya's arm and led her carefully over a little wooden bridge. Valya told him about Antonina. She felt really sorry for her now; she'd forgotten all about the rude way the girl had spoken to her. Vladimir, however, said he had no pity for Antonina: if a girl carries on with a no-good like Yasha, she deserves all that's coming to her.

"Yasha's a real pest," he said. "A faker, a disgrace to the whole shop. And your Antonina goes and falls for a type like that!"

"How could she know the sort he was?" said Valya. "She works in a different shop."

"I see, so she trusted a fellow she didn't know. You can smell the liquor on Yasha's breath a verst away. I suppose you'll tell me she didn't notice that. Why didn't she take the trouble to find out whether Yasha was married? I'm surprised to hear you defending her."

"I'm not defending her, I'm sorry for the girl."

"There's no need to be sorry for her," Vladimir sounded grave. "She's not a kid. It wasn't because he had a swagger pair of boots or sang to her that she went with him, was it? Or because he took her to the restaurant? And you're feeling sorry for her!"

Valya let him go on. Everything Vladimir said was true, of course. But the memory of Antonina's haunted expression, of the hatred on her face for her unborn child, and the thought of how the girl must have felt when she decided to drown herself—all that wrung pity out of her.

She said nothing of this to Vladimir; he saw things from another point of view, a man's point of view. Dusya also despised Yasha, yet she had taken Antonina into her house. Yelena Protasova knew as well as Vladimir the sort of fellow Yasha was, but that hadn't prevented her running after Antonina when she saw her leave the house. There were some things that only women could understand.

So it was with a sense of superiority over her husband that Valya listened to his reasoning. He was insensible to the maternal feelings of a woman. What he said was all quite true, but, all the same, something had to be done to help Antonina.

"Sure you're not too tired?" Vladimir said when they started to climb the hill. "Would you like to rest a little?"

And although Valya did not feel at all tired, just to please her husband she said faintly: "Yes, let's rest. Let's sit down for a minute or two on that bench."

Yasha was not seen again in the shop after that scrap with Nikolai. He gave notice that he wanted to work in the garage instead and Kovalev willingly let him go. The vacancy was filled by a beginner; Yasha was soon forgotten in the turnery.

Forgotten, that is, by all except Nikolai who, when helping the newcomer, used to sigh and think how useful Yasha's capable hands would be to the section just then. The turners were not finding it easy to learn to handle the new order and the younger ones had to struggle to fulfil their quotas. Indeed, but for Nazarenko and Yelena Protasova things might have been very bad. These two not only took on the most difficult work themselves but helped Nikolai in every possible way.

"Don't let Yasha's going worry you," Nazarenko told Nikolai. "Protasova is talking Uncle Vasya into coming back. He says he'll come if you ask him. They haven't started work in the new shop yet."

Nikolai did not at all like the idea of lowering himself before Uncle Vasya but everybody advised him to do so.

"Oh yes, you ought to ask him to come back—and ask him the right way too," said Dusya. "I bet he'll come. Specially now Yasha's gone. We can go along together if you like."

But Nikolai preferred to go alone; if he had to eat humble pie he'd do it without witnesses. For a whole day he worried about how to broach the subject, how and when to see the old worker. However, the talk turned out to be unexpectedly easy. When Nikolai, feeling embarrassed and uneasy, went up to Uncle Vasya, the man realized at once what was in the wind and smilingly asked him: "Come to call me back?"

Nikolai faltered something about realizing there had been a misunderstanding and that he was sorry, but the old turner interrupted him.

"Why all the explanation? Sorry, you say? I realize there are only youngsters left in the section. Anyhow, there's no work for me here yet. I'll come back to you tomorrow."

That evening Nikolai probably felt happier than at any time since he had come to the factory.

He went home in the best of spirits, dashed up the stairs—and suddenly stopped as if he had run up against someone's fist. Immediately ahead of him, on the landing, stood his father, his walking-stick raised to point at the enormous daisies painted on the wall. Nikolai had long ago grown accustomed to those out-size flowers and even found them quite pretty, but his father was apparently making fun of the local artist as he spoke in his loud voice to a young man who stood beside him with respectful attention.

Nikolai felt himself in the grip of strange, conflicting emotions. His immediate delight yielded in a flash to an unaccountable sense of embarrassment. He wanted to slip past unnoticed but at that moment his father turned and recognized him.

"Hello, Nik, here you are," he said, slipping his stick under his arm and laying his hands on Nikolai's shoulders. "Didn't I tell you we should meet in the Urals?"

He planted a hearty kiss on Nikolai's cheek and introduced him to his companion, whom he described as his assistant from the head office. "He graduated a year or two before you, by the way," he added. "Preferred to stay in Moscow. Not like you. He's full of ambition and is really quite gifted."

The young man whose name was Alexander Dmitrievich Chertkov was somewhat stiff in his manner towards Nikolai.

"You look a real production man," said Nikolai's father. "Overalls, a tool sticking out of your pocket and metal filings on your fingertips. Are you sure you're liking it here? Maybe the time's come to bring you back to Moscow?"

Nikolai shook his head firmly; his father patted him on the shoulder and said he would like to see Nikolai's room. As he went upstairs he told Nikolai that he had dropped in while on a business trip. He had a factory to visit in the neighbourhood but had something to attend to at Verkhnyaya Kamenka too.

He'd been very busy recently and hadn't been able to call on Nikolai's mother; so he couldn't give Nikolai any news of her.

As if he used to call on her often, thought Nikolai, carefully freeing his shoulder from his father's grasp. He had all the news of his mother without any help from that direction.

"Just a minute. I'll get the key," he said, going on ahead.

When the hostel warden handed Nikolai the key to his room, he told him that a visitor had been asking for him. He occupied the double-bedded corner room.

"If he's someone you know tell him I'm not a lackey but a civil servant," Sasha added resentfully. "Tried to tip me!"

Sasha's freckled face burned with indignation; Nikolai promised to speak to the visitor about the matter.

"He's my father, you see," he said, tapping the key lightly on Sasha's desk. "He's turned up on business."

Nikolai's voice had something unnatural about it. Sasha cast him a look of understanding. He knew those fathers!

"Don't worry," he said. "If he's here on business let him get off to the factory."

But Nikolai's father was in no hurry to go to the factory. He examined Nikolai's room, admired the view from the window but said he thought the factory management might at least have provided a qualified



engineer with a room to himself instead of making him double up with someone else. Nikolai listened to his father in silence. He did not offer Chertkov a chair and did not sit down himself; he remained standing near the door like a stranger in his own room.

For a brief moment a feeling of bitter resentment against his father such as he had not experienced since he was a little boy rose in Nikolai; but it subsided at once. Now he and his father were almost on equal terms: he, Nikolai, had become a self-supporting, independent man. Moreover, he had achieved this without the help of his father. There had been times when he had longed for some attention from his father but none had been forthcoming. Why, then, had his father turned up now with his offers of help, his suggestions of speaking to the director about getting Nikolai a separate room, or of having him moved to more interesting work?

"I could get a room for myself any day, if I wanted it. But I don't need one. As for my work I find it interesting and I'm not prepared to give it up for any other."

Nikolai spoke with unaccustomed firmness. There was no smile on his lips as he looked into his father's eyes. For a fraction of a second Zhukov senior lost his poise. His thick neck flushed deeply; he gave a short laugh and ran his handkerchief under his collar.

"A bit hot in here," he said placidly. "All right for skinny young fellows like you, but I can't stand it with my weight."

He quickly recovered from his embarrassment and invited Nikolai to join him at supper in the restaurant.

"I'll leave my work till tomorrow morning," he said. "It's not very important, anyhow. You lead the way; you're a local inhabitant."

But Nikolai declined the invitation to supper. He had something to do in the shop; people were waiting for him. He could show them to the restaurant, of course, although it was easy enough to find without his help—all they had to do was to walk to the end of the building and take the first street to the right.

Nikolai spoke tersely, drily; he returned his father's somewhat mocking glance boldly. Chertkov, silent and respectful, looked at Nikolai with some surprise—he had, apparently, expected a very different meeting between father and son.

Together they went downstairs; to keep the conversation from flagging, Nikolai's father said something superior about the paintings on the landings. Nikolai flared up and said that one had to know the Urals countryside before one could judge the merits of those paintings.

"I know a bit about it, son," his father said mildly. "I spent two years working here during the war."

Nikolai let this remark pass unheeded and ran swiftly down the last flight of stairs.

"You go that way. The restaurant's just round the corner," he said.

He nodded and hurried off towards the factory. He did not glance back; he did not want to see either his father or his companion again; he wanted to forget that they had come. Reaching the garden in the square before the factory gates, he suddenly realized that he was tired, and dropped on to the bench where he had not long before sat with Yasha.

He longed for Andrei's company. How much he would like to sit with him somewhere beside the lake. But Andrei had disappeared. Andrei

had been doing that often lately, coming home late and sitting down at once at the writing table. Nikolai had noticed how Andrei would take the lid off the ink-pot, place a clean sheet of paper in front of him, start writing something, cross it out and sit gazing out of the window.

Maybe Andrei was trying to write poetry and finding it difficult. Andrei was in love—that was abundantly clear to Nikolai, though Andrei hadn't said a word to him about it; and Nikolai, who felt hurt by his friend's secretiveness, had not asked him anything about it.

Nikolai went on wandering about aimlessly till he met Vladimir Nazarenko. Vladimir was running in a state of great excitement, his hair awry, his face pale.

"They've taken Valya to hospital," he babbled. "It's started."

He might have been referring to an earthquake. Nikolai could see the beads of perspiration on Nazarenko's broad face.

"They won't let anybody in," said Nazarenko, looking round distractedly. "Maria Borisovna turned me out and said I should call tomorrow morning. What am I going to do till then? Poor Valya was moaning like anything."

Vladimir took out a handkerchief and with trembling hands mopped his damp face. How unfair everything was! It was his fault that Valya was in pain, yet he was getting off scot free. How on earth could anyone expect him to go back to the hostel and sleep calmly while she was going through that ordeal?

"It's not an ordeal," said Nikolai with a superior air. "Every day thousands of women give birth and nothing happens to them. Tomorrow you'll be a proud father, that's all."

"Maybe I will and maybe I..." said Vladimir in a tragic whisper. He did not complete the phrase. "Let's walk past the hospital. Perhaps we'll be able to find out something."

The hospital stood in large grounds divided from the street by a green fence. They went in and stood underneath the windows of a part of the building where according to Vladimir the maternity ward was located. Valya had pointed out those windows to him long ago. Although it was late, the windows were open; the ward, however, was in darkness, only in two net-curtained windows a little farther along were there lights burning.

"That's the place," Vladimir whispered. "I wonder if I can hear her shrieks."

They stood immediately below the windows but heard nothing. Only the light footsteps of a white-gowned nurse hurrying through the garden to some out-building—the kitchen, probably.

"Let's sit on the grass," said Vladimir. "Over there."

They sat down on the damp bedewed grass. But almost immediately Vladimir sprang to his feet; wasn't that a moan he had heard inside?

"That wasn't a moan, it was a baby crying," said Nikolai. "D'you know, I used to think it was only in novels that husbands lost their senses when their wives were having a baby. It's true though. Pull yourself together or I'll go home."

Vladimir begged him not to leave. He promised to be patient and calm until it was all over. He sat down again and stretched himself out with his hands under his head.

"Think I'll take a little nap," he said with forced composure. "Let's see if we can sleep."

He shut his eyes and lay still for a few minutes. Nikolai watched the expression on his face and saw that Vladimir had no intention of sleeping and was listening to every sound. When someone walked rapidly on the other side of the fence, Vladimir's head shot up immediately. A woman in a grey dress entered the garden; she climbed the steps and went straight indoors.

"That's the doctor's assistant. They must have sent for her," whispered Vladimir. "Why should they do that so late at night?"

"She's probably on night-duty," said Nikolai, making his voice sound as calm as possible. "Why don't you sleep for a bit? I'll wake you up if necessary."

"Why don't you sleep yourself?" asked Vladimir suspiciously. "Stretch yourself out."

"I don't feel sleepy. I've got something to think of—my father turned up here today."

"Your father?" echoed Vladimir without the slightest interest. "Maybe she's not on night-duty at all. What if they sent for her specially?"

Nikolai felt annoyed with Vladimir for paying no attention to his news but a glance at his distracted face told him that he had better say nothing. Was it so important, after all? His father had come, his father would leave. Since Nikolai had come to work in the Urals he had completely forgotten his father's existence. It had been different in Moscow. There his father might drop in at the flat at any moment, to the distress of his mother who could not stand his visits. In Moscow his father always had the power to stir up childhood memories. When Nikolai was a little boy, his father had been a much-loved, necessary being, and when his father had left him, Nikolai had felt very bitter and lonely. His mother had never told him the grounds for the divorce but the boys and girls in the yard knew everything from their parents and lost no time in telling Nikolai that his father had found a new, young wife.

"He was carrying on with her before, too," the girl who lived at No. 7 told him, watching Nikolai's face inquisitively. "Everybody except your mother and you knew all about it. We all felt so sorry for you. . . . Every time you and your mother went away she used to hang around here. Such a nasty creature, too."

To Nikolai all that was like a stab in the back. He said nothing to his mother about it but he told Andrei.

"My old man's married again," he said casually. "I don't care. I can get on even better without him. . . ."

That was not true. His mother locked the room his father used to work in, but it seemed to Nikolai that his father was somehow hiding in there behind that door, and might come out any minute. When an old-age pensioner moved into the room, things became a little easier. They hung a rug over a connecting door and later on papered it over entirely; and with that all hopes of his father's return vanished and a new stage in his life began. True, life lacked something that it had before, but it was more real. . . .

"Don't you ever leave Valya and the baby," Nikolai said to Vladimir without looking at him.

"Me leave Valya? Are you mad?" Vladimir leapt to his feet. "You've no idea how I love her. What d'you take me for? Yasha?"

Vladimir listened intently to the night but everything was quiet around them. He squatted down on the grass. In the darkness his face looked pale; his grey eyes were dilated and seemed to have grown darker. He went on talking about his wife, telling Nikolai how he had met her, how they had fallen in love, how gentle and defenceless his Valya was.

Before he met Valya he never thought he could be strong and bold or necessary to anyone. She had revealed qualities in him, the existence of which he had never suspected. She told him he was handsome whereas he'd always considered himself an ugly, clumsy sort of fellow and had been too shy to go out with girls. After hearing him sing when they were on their own in the park once, she told him he had a wonderful ear for music and that he certainly ought to learn to play some instrument. Valya was afraid of going for walks in the forest and so Vladimir discovered that he was not only fearless but that he even wanted to run into some real danger so that he could defend her. She told him they were going to have a son and that it would be the best-looking and most intelligent child in the whole place.

"She's been angry with me occasionally the last few weeks," he said. "But she was right. I didn't do anything about getting a flat. Now we're taking a room in Yelena Protasova's house. I'm going to move our things there tomorrow—mine, Valya's and the stuff for the baby. Then, when she's fit to leave hospital, I'll take the two of them there. She doesn't know anything about it. She still thinks she's going to live in the hostel. It'll be a surprise for her...."

Nikolai listened with envy. Why was it always others who had such happiness in their lives, and not he? Maybe if he had told Nina how he loved her, that time in Moscow, she would have joined him here? Why hadn't he opened his heart to Nina? Surely not because he was too timid? Or was it because he wasn't sure that he was really in love with her?

Vladimir stretched out on the grass again and stared at the starlit sky. He was thinking tensely of something. The hospital grounds were dark and quiet. Then the light behind the curtained windows grew brighter, and white-gowned figures moved to and fro. They moved silently. Nikolai watched them without saying anything to his companion. What was happening in there? Nothing terrible, it seemed—the light burned so brightly and calmly in the windows.

Glancing out of the corner of his eye at Vladimir, Nikolai saw that he had fallen asleep. His eyes were shut, his chest rose and fell evenly, one hand involuntarily brushed away a blade of grass that was tickling his neck. Slipping off his jacket, Nikolai covered Vladimir with it and lay down beside him. He was just falling off to sleep himself when someone came out on to the porch and sat there smoking. Nikolai nudged Vladimir with his elbow.

"Look, there's someone over there in white. Let's go and ask about Valya."

Vladimir shot up and stared ahead with empty sleepy eyes. Then he sprang to his feet, tossing aside Nikolai's jacket and sprinted to the porch. Nikolai got up, brushed the dry grass off his shoulders and followed him.

"It's a girl, a girl," he heard Vladimir shout. "Everything's all right. Valya's sleeping."

He was dancing in front of a man little older than himself and shaking him warmly by the hand.

"Thank you, doctor, thank you. Oh, what a relief... Please tell Valya I'm terribly glad."

"Write her a note," the doctor said with a friendly laugh. "I'll put it beside her bed and she'll see it first thing in the morning."

Nikolai took out a notebook and pencil and Vladimir, leaning low over the paper, scribbled a few lines.

"Here you are," he said. "I've written the most important thing. Tomorrow I'll write her a long letter."

"And don't forget the flowers," said the doctor. "That's customary on such occasions, you know."

"Yes, I'll bring flowers too. Let's pick some, Nikolai Nikolayevich."

He longed to do something right away for Valya and for his little daughter, the two beings who were dearer and more necessary to him than anybody else in the world. To gather flowers, to move the things into the new room, to go shopping. Nikolai, however, restrained him.

"You ought to ask the gardener for some flowers," he said. "You can't give her a bunch of daisies. You need roses and carnations and some other nice-smelling flowers. We'll go to the trade union and to Lyuba Zvonaryeva and get them to give us a chit for the gardener. We'll move your things after work. The boys will give us a hand. What's the sense in disturbing Protasova at this hour of the night. She has to go to work in the morning."

Vladimir listened with a frown. All right, the things could wait till the evening. Nikolai could go home and sleep; he would stroll around a little longer. He preferred to be alone now.

He accompanied Nikolai to the Stalingrad and, assuring him that he was going home to bed, set off for the park. Nikolai, glancing back through the glass-panelled door, noticed the way he was going and smiled.

Happiness is catching. Nikolai dashed joyfully up the stairs, quite forgetting that his father was sleeping behind one of those doors. He decided to wake Andrei up and tell him how he and Vladimir had kept watch under the windows of the hospital.

But he did not have to wake Andrei up: Andrei was not asleep, he was sitting in the dark room at the open window, the table pushed back from him. At his side, with her head resting on his shoulder, sat Lyuba Zvonaryeva. Nikolai stopped dead at the door; he was afraid he had disturbed them; but neither of them noticed him. They were looking out of the window where a slender crescent moon hung in the sky, slipping in and out among the fast moving clouds.

"Looks like a boat," said Lyuba. Nikolai hardly recognized her voice, it was so soft and tender.

"Yes, I see," said Andrei. "Now it's coming out from behind that cloud again."

Andrei's voice had an unfamiliar note in it too, and Nikolai had an uncomfortable feeling of having intruded on others' secrets. He decided to leave the room but the floor board creaked and Andrei turned round.

"That you, Nik?" he asked in a loud voice. "Where've you been all this time? Come in and tell us."

Chapter Twelve

1

"The question is not quite as simple as you seem to think, Stepan Demyanovich. I know there are many who like Kovalev's machine but . . . but there are a number of circumstances which the head office has no right to disregard."

Nikolai Mikhailovich Zhukov sat in a deep arm-chair near the window.

At a distance from him, sitting up against the wall, Chertkov had found himself a modest place; on his knees he held a bulky brief-case with two clasps. Stoletov paced the room, his hands folded behind his back.

Ten had struck before Zhukov reached the factory. Stoletov had already been round the shops, had visited with Koryakov the site of the new apartment house and found out how things were going there, and had taken Lyuba Zvonaryeva to task for not organizing a competition between the building workers and the Comsomol members of the machine shop. In short, Stoletov was well into his working day when Zhukov had wished him a good morning and told him he was ready to begin.

It was clear that Zhukov had spent a good night, had breakfasted well, was in an excellent mood and found the world to his liking.

"It's about those circumstances that I wanted to have a word with you alone," Zhukov continued, his eyes following Stoletov. "They are not altogether in Kovalev's favour and that's something he must reckon with."

"But, if I'm not mistaken, you yourself recommended the Kovalev machine, Nikolai Mikhailovich," said Stoletov. He sat down next to Zhukov. "I remember a document that referred to its excellent qualities. That's why I wrote to you in the first place. . . ."

"Oh, I'm not denying that it has excellent qualities, undoubtedly it has," Zhukov said with animation. "But time passes, and new pieces of machinery that are improvements on the old appear and the others have to make way for them. That's exactly what happened in the case of Kovalev's invention."

He went on to tell Stoletov about the machine that had superseded Kovalev's: it was a product of the designing bureau at head office; a large group of gifted men and women had worked on it; it had been provisionally named the Kurzhen; an experimental model had been made and had yielded thoroughly satisfactory results in operation. This machine would probably be included in the ministry's production plan and the factory would have to make its arrangements to produce it on a large scale.

"I think, Stepan Demyanovich, that you ought to find the Kurzhen more to your liking than Kovalev's 'shrew,'" Zhukov said with a smile. "The designer has preserved all the principles of excavation work—there's been no compromise there. But he's introduced the rotary principle as well—several scoops work at once and deposit their loads on to a conveyor belt."

He glanced at Chertkov who unlocked the brief-case and whisked out a leather-bound prospectus which he handed to Stoletov; then he took up his place beside him, ready to offer explanations.

The first page showed a general view of the machine. It resembled a river dredger in that it had scoops which were attached to a moving belt that carried them up; but instead of the usual barge for the dredged sand there was a conveyor belt very much like the one on the "shrew." The scoops moved in a ring, each one sweeping up its load from the bottom of the excavation pit.

"Interesting," said Stoletov as he turned over the pages. "Nothing original about the design, of course, but it's applied in a new way."

He examined the various details of the machine and made a note of the fact that the prospectus had been machine-printed though in a small edition, one hundred copies in all.

"The design has been patented and a certificate issued," said Zhukov, noticing the other's interest in the notes at the back of the prospectus. "The designer's interests will not suffer as a result of it going into mass production."

"What was the idea of having this printed?"

"To popularize a useful machine and stimulate this discussion," said Zhukov, smiling. "The design was discussed on many occasions—both at special meetings at the head office and at scientific-technical conferences. The question of putting something into mass production is not one to be decided lightly."

Stoletov did not like Zhukov's slightly pedantic manner of speech. There was something irritating about this leading official from head office who sat there talking in this superior way to his subordinates in the provinces. But his resentment was short lived: after all the head office must know much more about every new technical improvement.

"It's hard to form an opinion from the drawings," he said as he returned the prospectus to Chertkov. "I think, though, that there's room for both types of machine. Moreover, I find Kovalev's machine more interesting because it solves the problem of shifting earth on new principles whereas this machine of yours sticks to the old principle of the scoop, merely increasing the number and unloading on to a conveyor belt."

"But it does away with the need for lorries."

"That problem can be solved a different way—by lengthening the jib of the excavator," said Stoletov. "There's nothing at all new about an excavator that works with an arm long enough to unload the excavated earth on to the required spot without the use of lorries."

"By the way, what about that other excavator your previous group was working on?" asked Zhukov. "A great pity you had to drop such interesting work. From what I hear though, you're still giving your comrades a hand."

Zhukov, it seemed, was excellently informed about what was going on in the excavator works. He had visited the place not long before, had seen the design for the jib that Stoletov had sent and knew which of Stoletov's suggestions his comrades had found useful. He spoke about these matters with enthusiasm and turned the conversation away from the Kovalev machine without Stoletov being aware of it.

Stoletov found it interesting to talk about the excavator works, about which Zhukov knew so much. He learned that in the current year the works had received much new equipment, that several shops had been extended and that there were plans to open a branch of a scientific research institute there.

"I expect you think about your old job from time to time, don't you? It's always hard to break with a place you've grown used to. . . ." Zhukov sighed in sympathy with Stoletov, adding at once that the Verkhnyaya Kamenka factory had a great future too. "My youngster's working here. Still only a boy. Doesn't seem so long since he was running about with a Young Pioneer scarf round his neck, and now he's an engineer and looks a real production man."

He stopped as if expecting Stoletov to say something about Nikolai; but Stoletov did not react and Zhukov changed the subject and began talking about how he had worked in the Urals during the war and how delighted he was to find so much industrial development there since the war.

"I can't recognize it," he said. "I remember places where there used to be only a few barrack-like buildings—why, there are whole towns there now! The scale's something tremendous. Have you seen the House of Culture at Tagil? You haven't? Take my advice and go and have a look at it. It's simply grand."

While Zhukov went on talking, Stoletov sat wondering what could have brought the man to Verkhnyaya Kamenka. Was it to inform them that head office had decided to give the *coup de grâce* to the Kovalev machine? That did not require a personal visit, a letter would have done. Or was it to see his son? That was another matter; it was clear though that Zhukov had not yet had a heart-to-heart talk with Nikolai, for, if he had, he would certainly have raised the subject of the difficulties Nikolai was now surmounting.

Lost in his reflections, Stoletov stopped listening to what Zhukov was saying; then he noticed that Zhukov was waiting for an answer. He was about to ask him to repeat his question when Andrei poked his head through the window. He was waving a fresh copy of the regional Comsol-mol paper.

"Seen the paper, Stepan Demyanovich?" he asked. "What d'you think of that article? They've printed a picture too. Dusia Syurtukova and the lads in the foundry."

Andrei did not notice Zhukov sitting close to the window. Zhukov looked up and waved a friendly hand.

"Hello, Comrade Editor, don't recognize your old friends, eh? I read that article of yours. Good work."

"Why, it's you, Nikolai Mikhailovich. I didn't know you were here. What a surprise. Very glad to see you."

So Zhukov had not seen his son, thought Stoletov. He couldn't have done, for Andrei and Nikolai shared a room.

"You shouldn't have gone for Nik the way you did in the paper," said Zhukov as he shook Andrei's hand. "I remember what you wrote: 'Foreman Zhukov is not taking the initiative.' Is that the way one comrade should write about another? I didn't expect it of you. You've been such friends for so long—and then, all of a sudden, I see that in the paper."

"But Nikolai didn't mind," said Andrei. "We went over the article together before it was printed."

"Same old 'unity of opposites,' as your father used to say about you two, eh?" said Zhukov with a smile. "What would you say if your work was criticized?"

"I'll accept criticism from friends just as from strangers, if I've deserved it," said Andrei. "Please come to my office, look through the file and point out my mistakes. As a matter of fact, I send my old man a copy of every issue. Doesn't he show you them?"

Andrei looked at Zhukov enquiringly but Zhukov avoided a straight answer.

Stoletov found this polite, debonair engineer less and less to his liking. In fact, he didn't like him at all.

"Perhaps we should ask Comrade Kovalev to join us," he said, laying down the newspaper. "Or shall we go and see him in the shop?"

Stoletov wanted to get the talk about the "shrew" over as soon as possible. Zhukov, apparently, was of the same opinion. He asked Stoletov to send for Kovalev.

"That would really suit me better, if you don't mind," he said. "I've only a limited amount of time at my disposal; I want to see my son before leaving."

While Stoletov was on the phone, Zhukov made plans with Andrei about meeting him later.

"Let's have dinner together," he suggested. "The restaurant isn't at all bad. Why don't both of you come? I didn't make any plans with Nikolai last night about what we should do today. You went off to work too early for me this morning, I'm afraid."

Andrei left after promising to arrange things with Nikolai. As he went out of the room he ran into Kovalev. Zhukov smiled, walked across the room to meet Kovalev, grasped both his hands and shook them vigorously.

Kovalev looked cold and mistrustful. With reserve he wished Zhukov good morning, nodded to Chertkov and sat down waiting for someone to open the conversation. Zhukov asked for the prospectus again and began to turn over the pages in front of Kovalev. He spoke considerately of the good points of Kovalev's "shrew," not forgetting to mention that he had once championed it, and once more listed the reasons why the machine had not been put into production.

"My advice to you now, Arseni Mikhailovich, is not to press for its production. It would be a pure waste of time, energy and nerves. Wait for a more suitable occasion. I hope that won't be too far off."

"I know all about this," said Kovalev, putting the prospectus aside. "The machine the head office intends to put into production isn't as good as mine. I can say that without boasting. Its chief merit is that it originated from head office and its leading workers. If you've come all the way from Moscow to Verkhnyaya Kamenka to tell me what you've just said, you've wasted your time."

Stoletov took no part in the conversation, but watched the two men attentively. Everything Kovalev said seemed right to him, all Zhukov's arguments flimsy and evasive. He could not exactly explain why he had these impressions. He simply did not like the whole "shrew" affair; in his subconscious lurked the idea that there was something fishy about it all.

No, he was not going to give up. Stoletov eyed Zhukov grimly. True, Zhukov was an expert, backed by the head office, a scientific research institute and other organizations. Well, he wasn't a broken reed himself; he knew where to turn for help...

However, he did not betray his intentions to the others; he remained silent even when Kovalev, who had said all he wanted to, rose to his feet.

"It's a long time since I took any interest in getting that machine produced," Kovalev said. "You know that. I haven't been pestering you with letters and statements—you know that too. This meeting did not take place on my initiative. There's nothing for us to talk about. With your permission, I'll go back to the shop, to my work."

He left the office without even a glance at the prospectus.

"You see how things are," said Zhukov with a shrug. "You can't talk to him: he won't listen to reason, he's always looking for undercurrents and hidden snags."

Zhukov sounded irritated. He flung the prospectus at the silent Chertkov. Chertkov flipped open the clasps of the brief-case and slipped the prospectus in.

"But I hope *you* don't think there's any funny business going on, Stepan Demyanovich," Zhukov went on. "I'd be very upset if you did."

For all his outward calm, Zhukov was puzzled and slightly at a loss. He had clearly not expected such frank speaking. Perhaps he'd counted on finding a tamer, quieter Kovalev; perhaps he thought Stoletov had written to him on a momentary impulse and that the question of the Kovalev machine would simply not arise again.

Sensing the other's mood, Stoletov changed the subject by proposing to Zhukov a visit to the factory or to the site of the new block of flats. Zhukov said he would like to see both; Stoletov asked a man from the technical information department to show the visitor everything he wanted to see.

Zhukov took his leave with forced cordiality.

"Don't fail to give me a ring when you're next in Moscow," he said. "My wife and I would be delighted to see you..."

Once out of the office Zhukov's face changed; the genial, animated look faded and it was with a bored expression that he walked across the factory yard, oblivious to the explanations of his young guide. Glancing into the foundry, he thought of his glossy shoes and decided not to go in.

"You knock off for dinner at noon, don't you?" he asked. "It's three minutes to, and I have an appointment with my son. Where's the first machine shop. Let's go there."

Nikolai was not in the shop. A middle-aged woman in blue overalls looked up from her lathe and said the foreman had gone to town and wouldn't be back before the evening shift.

"To town?" echoed Zhukov. "What's he gone there for?"

"He got permission from the shop manager to go on private business," the woman replied. "Gone to buy a cot. We've had an event in our section. A baby."

"A baby? Nikolai! Impossible!"

"No, not him," said the woman with a smile. "Our foreman's not married yet. The wife of one of our turners has a baby daughter and we decided to give her a present. Nikolai Nikolayevich has gone to buy it."

Zhukov looked round the turnery. He saw that, with the exception of this woman, everyone was young—*younger*, perhaps, than Nikolai himself. He sat down at Nikolai's desk and scribbled a brief note.

"Very sorry we didn't meet again after all. Just off. My greetings. If you need any help, don't forget you have a father."

Chertkov and the young man from the technical information department waited for him while he wrote.

"Ready," said Zhukov, tucking the note under a spanner. "Let's be off."

Zhukov did not visit any more of the factory and he turned down the invitation to look over the housing estate. He went back to the Stalin-grad, pulled a chair up to the window of his room and sat in silence, his eyes on the road along which the car that was being sent for him from the town would come. Chertkov tried to start a conversation, but Zhukov silenced him with an irritated gesture and suggested he should take a walk and have a look round the new buildings.

"You'll find it useful," he added caustically. "At your age it's essential to get to know new places. Who knows, you may have to come and work at a factory like this!"

Silent and obedient Chertkov left the room; a few moments later Zhukov saw him down in the street below, looking about him.

"Take a good look, my lad," Zhukov muttered. "We'll send you out of Moscow to a factory and see how you'll get on there."

Zhukov had an inexplicable and unpleasant feeling of having lost something he valued. It was only quite recently that Nikolai had been a little boy. He could see the little fellow with his round close-cropped head, dressed in his white shirt with a Young Pioneer's red silk scarf, rushing to meet his father across the yard, abandoning his game of football—the best loved game of all. He would rush to his father, his arms wide apart, ready to hug him tight as he looked up with eyes brimming with love and devotion.

And now his son was a qualified engineer. Grown up. A decent young fellow, apparently. His eyes were still clear and candid, but now they looked at him as if he were a stranger. Now his son avoided meeting him, wouldn't talk to him, wanted to have nothing to do with his father. That was confoundingly unpleasant. Unfair too.

It wasn't as if he'd not fulfilled his parental obligations. He'd sent money, hadn't he? But that crazy woman had returned it. He'd arranged for his son to have a holiday by the sea, tried to help him when he went to college and then when he got his first job. He'd done everything, but his helping hand had always been refused.

It was Maria's fault, thought Zhukov, picturing to himself the face of his first wife. It was she who had robbed him of the love and trust of his son. She had taken her revenge on him. But now she, too, was left alone. Her son had gone; he had his own life, his own work now, and both his father and mother were forgotten.

Just then he remembered the white stone ink-stand and the note he had seen propped up against it: "Mother. Thank you for my degree. Your son."

No, she had not been forgotten. Her photograph hung on the wall of Nikolai's room in this very building and, of course, he wrote to her about everything he did. . . .

The car had not arrived; Zhukov had had enough of sitting by himself at the window. He glanced down into the street and saw Chertkov meekly

strolling in the garden of the factory square. Zhukov waved to him and Chertkov hurried back. Panting and respectful, he stood in the door.

"Let's go to the Green Mountain," said Zhukov. "But please tell that independent young man who behaves as if he's in charge of a Moscow hotel that if our car comes it's to wait for us."

At the Green Mountain he ordered a copious luncheon, drank a glass of old brandy and with it recovered his self-confidence. He mentioned to Chertkov in passing that his relations with his son had been strained for many years and expressed the hope that Chertkov was on better terms with his father.

"My father's dead," said Chertkov. "I treasure his memory."

"That's what I like to hear," said Zhukov. "Look, isn't that our car coming?"

2

The maternity ward in the factory hospital was known as the "main ward." Its beds were the most comfortable, its curtains by far the prettiest. It was the first ward the doctors visited on their morning rounds; here the most interesting conversations took place.

Valya Nazarenko's ward-mates were Antonina and a Heroine Mother who was having her tenth baby. Antonina lay all the time with her face to the wall, pretending to be asleep. She talked as little as possible. Her bed stood apart from the other two, near the door. The top of her bedside locker was bare except for some bottles of medicine.

Valya's locker could not hold all the flowers she was sent and they often overflowed on to the window-sill. Every morning, on his way to work, Vladimir stole up to the window and slipped a fresh bunch of flowers through it. He borrowed vases from all his friends in the hostel and brought the flowers in them, complete with water. Every evening another bunch appeared on the window-sill.

But not only Vladimir brought flowers; they came from Valya's girl friends, from the girls in the print-shop, from Yelena Protasova. Valya wanted to share them with Antonina who never had any visitors, and she asked the nurse to place a bunch on the locker beside her bed, but Antonina, as if by accident, knocked the vase to the floor with her elbow. It broke, and the flowers scattered.

"People are right not to bring you any flowers," said the nurse as she swept up the broken glass. "The other patients manage to keep ever so many bunches in order and you can't even manage to look after one."

"I don't need the ugly things," snapped Antonina. "Don't put any more of them near me."

Valya felt deeply hurt that her present had been called ugly. It was a lovely bunch—asters and dahlias and beautiful decorative grasses. It was not one of the bunches that Vladimir had brought her—she never gave those away. Polina had brought it from the girls in the print-shop. And with the flowers she brought her own present, a bottle of May Day eau-de-Cologne.

Visitors were not admitted to the ward but everyone came to the window. That was where Polina came with the flowers. She looked smart and was wearing a new pair of ear-rings. She congratulated Valya, conveyed the greetings of the two girls as well as of Poperechny and the printer,

and said she had a present for little Ksenia too, but that it would have to wait until the baby had left hospital.

"I've made her a pink lace frock. There's very pretty lace material in the shop and I bought some to make a blouse for myself but there was some left over so I managed to make a little frock."

"What does she want lace for?" asked Valya. "She's still in diapers."

"She'll wear it when she's grown a little. I got the pattern from my sister—her girl'll soon be a year old."

As she chattered on, Polina looked round the ward with interest. The Heroine Mother was lying on her back, knitting something with clicking needles; Antonina, as usual, was pretending to be asleep, with the sheet drawn right up to her face. Polina's sharp eyes at once noticed that Antonina's locker was bare, and she asked Valya in a whisper whether Yasha ever came to see Antonina.

Valya shook her head; then Polina whispered that Yasha had a new flame, a girl from the stone-cutting works across the lake.

"He doesn't give Tonya a thought, the wretch," Polina went on, her ear-rings shaking. "He's fooled so many girls, and given his wife hell, but the world's full of numbskulls. I've no sympathy for them."

Antonina buried her head still deeper in her pillow and drew the sheet up till it concealed her completely. Valya noticed this and cast Polina a warning glance, but Polina was already off on a new subject -- newspaper shop-talk.

"Things are in an awful state without you," she said. "There's no one to type and all the copy comes to me in manuscript. Nobody writes worse than Andrei Borisovich, unless it's Vanya. You lose patience, trying to make out the words: Vanya's having a shot at typing himself but he's terribly slow."

"He'd better look out he doesn't bust the typewriter," said Valya uneasily. "Keep an eye on it, Polina; it'll be awful if anything went wrong with that lovely typewriter."

"It can be repaired, can't it," intervened the Heroine Mother. "That's easily done. You shouldn't let little things like that worry you."

The Heroine Mother was a buxom woman in her late thirties, with a calm, gentle face. For her the arrival of yet another baby was no great event, but she was the soul of kindness to the young mothers, giving them advice about what they ought to do for the sake of their own health and so that their babies should grow up strong. She maintained that the main thing was to keep calm: if a mother didn't worry, if she slept at the right times and ate properly, her baby wouldn't fret and would eat and sleep properly too. And what more did a child in arms want than that?

"Hygiene," said Valya timidly. "Clean nappies, baths, fresh air."

"That goes without saying; you heard all that at the consultations. But the baby's character depends on the way you behave more than on anything else."

"Our Valya's got a kind, calm nature," said Polina. "If little Ksenia inherits her nature she'll grow up into a really nice girl."

"That all depends on the way she's brought up," said the Heroine Mother, her needles clicking. "What's inheritance got to do with it?"

Polina, who never liked anyone to oppose her opinions, hastily got ready to leave.

"I'm going to the pictures," she said. "There's a new picture, a Hungarian one. They say there's an actor with a lovely voice in it."

Promising to drop in again, she threw Valya a kiss, nodded to the Heroine Mother and left. Before going, though, she assured Valya that she considered herself Ksenia's god-mother: although they did not go in for christening babies these days, it was still nice to have a god-mother.

The Heroine Mother went on knitting the blue woollen yarn—she was making a jumper for her eldest daughter, a girl already of school-leaving age. The big ball of wool lay beside her in a box to prevent it rolling off the bed. On the bedside locker stood a jar of cranberry juice, the top covered with a piece of gauze, a pot of home-made clotted cream, and a fuchsia plant in full flower. All these had been brought by her husband and elder children.

The fuchsia was hung with large deep-red flowers. The nurses watered it every day and gushed over its beauty.

Life ran on smoothly in the ward. The main event of the day was feeding the babies. The nurse would carry all three in together and each time Valya had the awful feeling that the nurse was going to drop her Ksenia or bump her head against the door. Ksenia, of course, was the prettiest of the three, so tender and fair. The Heroine Mother's baby—a boy—was too big and he cried in a bass voice. As for Antonina's little boy, he was quite dark and ugly, like a raven, thin, shrieking all the time, with a long blue beak of a nose.

Valya, naturally, did not mention this to Antonina but she obviously realized it for herself, for as soon as the baby was given to her she would turn her back on the ward, lay the infant up against the wall and feed him in silence. She always finished before the others and, when the nurse came in answer to her ringing, would say: "He's had enough. You can take him."

Valya fed Ksenia longer than any. She kept looking at her, moving the wrappings from her little head to see how the hair was growing, kissing her cheeks and taking delight in every movement of the tiny hands. She would whisper quietly to her daughter and tell her how they would go home and be met by Daddy, what lovely little frocks and bed-clothes were waiting for her. Ksenia would go on sucking and listening and then fall asleep, and then the nurse would take her back into the infants' ward.

Really, apart from the baby-feeding and the visitors coming to the window, nothing else happened in the maternity ward. But the days did not drag and the time when all three mothers would leave the hospital drew near.

The first to leave was the Heroine Mother. She was met outside the hospital by her husband and all their nine children. The children stood in a bunch under the window, squabbling about who was going to carry the baby. They had brought with them a blue flannel blanket and a pretty sheet with embroidered corners—the eldest girl had made it while her mother was in hospital.

By sitting right up, Valya could see through the window. The Heroine Mother came down the steps, the father carried the baby, the mother kept a careful hold on the potted fuchsia, and around her thronged the children. It was hard to tell whether they were supporting her or whether they were all hanging on to her.

How nice it would be if she and Vladimir had lots of children. Then she would get a Heroine Mother's medal and she'd have a brood of children round her.

The Heroine Mother was accompanied to the garden gate by Maria Borisovna and two nurses. It was a proper ceremony and Valya felt a twinge of envy when she thought that she and Vladimir would walk away from the place on their own. Well, not quite on their own—there'd be Ksenia.

But a day before Valya's turn came, Antonina was due to leave the hospital. Valya wondered who would be there to meet the girl, to bring the layette and help the mother and child home. Surely she wouldn't be quite alone with her "little raven" wrapped in a grey hospital blanket. Tears came to Valya's eyes at the very thought but she could not make up her mind to mention the matter to Antonina—she'd had so many rebuffs when she had tried to express sympathy.

Antonina slept badly on the night before she was due to leave. She tossed and turned, got up frequently and spent long spells at the window. The night was very dark. The trees in the garden rustled faintly, thunder rumbled in the distance and barely perceptible flashes of lightning illuminated for brief moments the crests of the mountains. Antonina sat beside the window lost in her thoughts. She did not notice that Valya had awakened and was looking at her in alarm.

The minutes dragged on; Valya could not contain herself.

"Tonya," she said in a low voice. "What are you sitting there for?"

The girl shrugged vexedly, slid down from the window-sill and went back to bed. She rolled up in a ball as if she wanted to make herself invisible, but in the faint light that penetrated the ward from the passage, Valya saw that she was sobbing silently. Her shoulders were heaving, she held the blanket pressed to her lips and made no attempt to brush away her tears.

Valya was now so frightened that she got up and crossed the ward to Antonina's bed. She sat down on a stool: she was afraid to sit on the bed in case Antonina should push her off. How could she tell how the girl would take her sympathy? But this time Antonina did not rebuff Valya; she sat up and began to whisper through her choking sobs.

"D'you think I don't blame myself for what I've done?" she began haltingly. "Every minute since he was born I've been blaming myself. Why, why did I do it? Why did I spoil my baby's life as well as my own? He's not to blame for anything. Perhaps he didn't even want to be born. What sort of life is he going to have? All the other children have got fathers, only he hasn't. . . . Tomorrow I've got to leave this place and who's going to come to meet me? If Mother had been alive she'd have forgiven me, she'd have come; but she's dead and I've only got a stepmother and I can't expect any pity from her."

Now Valya's tears were flowing too. She had forgotten that crying might be bad for the baby, that Antonina had been rude to her, had even struck her. Valya had but one thought in her mind—that Antonina and her "little raven" were quite alone in the world, that they needed help and that something would have to be done for both of them.

What a rotten lot those core-makers were, thought Valya. Not one girl had come to see Antonina. What little prigs they were. Turning up their noses at their friend just because she had a baby without getting married.

Valya stopped crying; her grief for Antonina's plight was replaced by anger with the core-makers. She was thinking how Antonina could be helped. First thing in the morning she must tell Vladimir that Antonina was due to leave hospital—there would be plenty of time because she would not be leaving until afternoon. Vladimir would have to arrange something. He could think what ought to be done and ask the boys about it. . . . Still better, he could explain the whole situation to Dusya Syurtukova: Dusya felt sorry for Antonina, had even brought her home to live with her, but Antonina had run off in her pride. Now she had lost some of that pride, though: she had to think of her son as well as of herself. . . . Valya would have to be careful not to oversleep and miss Vladimir when he brought her flowers the next morning.

"Don't cry, Tonya," she whispered. "Don't cry. What's a father, after all? Far better there isn't one at all than a fellow like Yasha. Why, Yasha's got a growing son as it is, but d'you think he ever gives a thought to him? Yasha's wife's the most miserable woman in the place. But you're independent. You can work to support yourself and your son. You're young, you can study and get a good qualification. You can go to the technical school in the autumn. After that you'll be a foreman. You'll leave Yasha far behind and won't even look at him."

"But I love him, Valya," sobbed Antonina. "I love him, although I know he's forgotten all about me. Could you forget someone you loved? Except for him I've never kissed a boy in my life, I never let anybody even hold my hand. . . . I never thought he'd drop me like that after—after getting what he wanted from me. . . ."

Antonina sat up in bed, the very image of her baby with her thin body and her dark face and big tearful eyes. Hastily she told Valya the whole story of her love affair with Yasha. It was as if a dam had broken; the words came flowing out by themselves. It had been a brief affair, with little to be remembered: Yasha had noticed her at a party and invited her for a dance, then they'd gone into town once or twice and been to the cinema together. They sat with their arms round each other in the back row. Yasha kissed her and called her his "little swallow." Nobody had called her that before—she knew she hadn't much in the way of looks.

"Then he started coming to see me in the hostel when the other girls were out. Nobody knew about it; I kept it a secret. I was afraid of what people might say. You see, he'd promised to marry me after he'd got his divorce. Then he stopped coming, didn't even say a word to me when we met. That's all his love amounted to. But I'm—I'm still in love with him."

Valya listened with astonishment. Could anyone love Yasha like that? It seemed impossible.

"You'll fall out of love with him all right, Tonya," she said firmly. "You'll have your son to love instead. What are you going to call him?"

"Igor," whispered Antonina. "I've a young brother called Igor. I'll call him after my brother."

"What about the surname?"

"Mine, of course. Why should he bear his father's name if he refuses to recognize him—or me, for that matter?"

They quietly discussed future plans: little Igor would be put in the crèche, Antonina would go back to work and in the evenings she would

study at the technical school. It was a pity that there was only one technical school in the place—for machine-builders. Antonina would rather have studied medicine so as to become a hospital nurse.

They became so engrossed in the subject that they let their voices rise; the night-nurse peeped into the ward.

"What's going on in here?" she enquired. "Why aren't you in bed, Nazarenko? Go to sleep at once. We can't have the regime upset like this."

The night-nurse waited until Valya had returned to her bed. Then she shut the door, only to reappear a few moments later.

"Whispering again? Stop it at once or I'll report you to Maria Borisovna tomorrow."

Again she left them, though this time she did not close the door. Valya and Antonina lay quiet, each thinking her own thoughts. Antonina was thinking that she might still make something of her life, that the baby might go to the crèche as a weekly boarder so that she could work and study. Then, if all went well, she would get a room of her own. Families were being moved out of the hostels into new houses and now she had a family. She would get her young brother to come from the village and put him in the trade school; then he would get a job in the factory. They'd make a family as good as any. Perhaps Yasha would then take some notice of his little Igor....

No, Yasha would not do that. He wouldn't take any notice of her either, or call her his little swallow again. What was the good of hoping, of dreaming of things that could never be? What she had to do was to think out her own life, to think for herself, for her son and for the husband who did not and was not going to exist. Her brow furrowed, her chin resting on her hand, Antonina thought and thought until sleep overcame her....

Next morning, when Antonina was called to the surgery for a last check-up before leaving, she had made up her mind.

"Maria Borisovna, could you help me to get work as a nurse in the crèche?" she enquired. "I heard from the nurses that they're short of staff. I wouldn't mind what they gave me."

"Why do you want to work there, Tonya?" asked Maria Borisovna with a searching look at Antonina. "It's hard work and the pay isn't particularly good compared to what you can earn in the factory with your qualifications."

How could she explain to Maria Borisovna that she didn't want to go back to the shop where the girls knew all about Yasha? How could she tell her that she did not want to be separated from little Igor—she wouldn't be allowed to keep him in the hostel at his age; he'd have to be boarded out. But how could she tell a stranger these most intimate and treasured thoughts?

But Maria Borisovna asked no more questions. She sat pondering, one hand making aimless marks with a pencil on a sheet of paper. She did not have to hear Antonina's story from the girl's own lips—there were no secrets in Verkhnyaya Kamenka.

"Well, Tonya," she said, laying her pencil aside. "I'll have a word with the head of the crèche and recommend you. I think she'll take you. And you'll get a place in the nurses' hostel. You'll be able to live there until you get a room of your own. Then, in the autumn, you'll have



to start learning. We are going to begin training courses for nurses. Would that suit you?"

"Yes," said Antonina. "It would do me very well. Thank you, Maria Borisovna."

"There's no need to thank me, my dear. We need nurses for the crèche and nobody is showing you any charity. I hope you'll be happy and well."

Although Maria Borisovna had spoken to her seriously, sternly even, Antonina came out of the surgery looking much happier. Now she knew that everything was not lost. She knew that there would be happiness in life for her and for Igor.

Every mother thinks her baby better than all other babies. And Antonina thought her "little raven" beautiful when Maria Borisovna picked the baby up in a flannel blanket and said:

"Here is your son. Take good care of him. Remember that now he must be the most precious thing on earth for you."

"I shall remember that," replied Antonina. "The most precious thing, of course he is."

In the grey dress she had worn when she came to hospital Antonina walked out. She carried her baby herself, pressing it tightly to her breast as though afraid of dropping it.

Valya watched her through the window. She saw Dusya meet Antonina at the garden gate. Dusya said something to her and looked at a little bundle she was carrying, wrapped in a clean white cloth. Antonina shook her head and walked past her. Dusya was left alone. She frowned, looked angrily after Antonina; then a smile lit up her face as she hurried after her.

Chapter Thirteen

1

Not long after Yasha Milovidov had left the turnery to work in the garage two of his pals and drinking-companions gave notice that they intended to follow his example. Nikolai read and reread the slips of paper but could not make up his mind what to do next; he went to Yelena Protasova for advice.

"This is Yasha's work," she said with a frown. "He wins the boys over and his chief's delighted. They're just the kind of fellows that garage manager likes. He's a thief and twister himself. He'd steal the nose off your face without your noticing it, and now he's choosing his own sort to work with him. It's your affair, of course, but in your place I'd not let Skvortsov go. Let the Comsomol deal with him first. As for the other fellow, he's good riddance."

Yelena Protasova had virtually become Nikolai's assistant, someone whom he consulted before taking any step. They had become good friends and Nikolai was a frequent visitor at Protasova's home: she reminded him in some ways of his mother.

The Nazarenkos with their baby Ksenia were now lodging with Yelena Protasova. Nikolai and Vladimir did all kinds of odd jobs about the house: they fixed electric light in the pantry, mended the garden gate and built a dog kennel out of some old planks.

Nikolai liked to see how well Vladimir and Valya got on with each other; their relations were so natural and straightforward. Valya was still on maternity leave, and she spent the time in looking after Ksenia and cooking for Vladimir who had just time to get home for dinner during the break. Vladimir always invited Nikolai to come with him but Nikolai never went: he knew the Nazarenkos liked to spend that time alone, without visitors.

At other times, however, they had visitors in plenty: Valya was always glad to see them. She herself thought up reasons for inviting people: when Ksenia was a fortnight old, when they registered her birth. . . . It was easy enough to find a pretext for a party.

The day Ksenia's birth was registered and the little girl took her first step to full Soviet citizenship Valya invited Antonina round. Antonina came alone; she was now working in the crèche as a babies' nurse; her Igor was boarded there and could not be brought to parties.

Nikolai and Polina were the only others invited that evening. Polina brought Ksenia a present—a silk frock and some ribbons.

"Hello, Tonya," said Polina and kissed the girl on the cheek. "If I'd known you were going to be here I'd have brought your little man a present. I've got some nappies ready for him."

"Igor's got thousands of nappies, thank you," said Antonina with a withering look. "You can keep your presents to yourself."

Antonina did not stay long and hardly spoke a word. She left without saying good-bye properly—just nodded and slipped out of the room. Only then did Polina give vent to her feelings.

"That girl's crazy," she fumed with a toss of the head. "She ought to be meek and mild instead of behaving like a mad wolf. What is she after all? A babies' nurse!"

But Antonina found a stout champion in Valya.

"Look here, Polina, it's all very well for you to talk, you haven't any children. Tonya's doing a very important job. In the old days only the rich could afford to have nurses; if poor mothers couldn't nurse, their babies used to die. It's not that way now. If, for some reason or other, a mother can't feed her baby, the crèche looks after that and the baby gets mother's milk all the same. Any mother respects a nurse."

"The only kind of job I can respect is one that requires qualification. Take you, for instance. You're a trained typist, you've got education, you could work as a proof-reader. I've got my qualifications too—I can work as a comp. I can make up a newspaper. But what's Tonya got to show for herself? She can nurse a baby, that's all. No great wisdom required for that!"

Nikolai and Vladimir went on eating cake and kept out of the conversation. What a subject to argue about! But, as he watched Polina and heard her talk, Nikolai reflected that Andrei probably didn't find her too easy to get on with at work. Yet Andrei put up with her; he knew how to handle her touchy nature. He, Nikolai, on the other hand, had fallen out with old, experienced turners.

Nikolai and Vladimir had their own "masculine" topic of conversation—friendship. They talked about Yasha, admitting ruefully that both of them had been wrong in not noticing his failings. Or rather, not considering them important when they did notice them.

"Friendship is something you can't squander," said Nikolai. "It's sacred, you've got to choose your friends very carefully."

"I don't agree with you there," said Vladimir. "Nobody's perfect. If you're going to start being choosy you'll never have any friends: you'll become a lone wolf."

"Nobody's perfect, of course. But there are degrees of imperfection, you know. What's more, being friendly with someone doesn't mean that you have to tolerate everything he does. Friendship doesn't mean overlooking faults, it means making the highest possible demands on each other."

"I agree with you completely, Nikolai Nikolayevich," intervened Polina. "But some of our girls look at things differently. They think this way: you're my friend, so keep quiet about my failings. Now, I don't like that; if people behave badly I like to show them up. That's why people are afraid of me. They don't understand me."

"They don't understand you because you flare up about things so easily," said Vladimir, annoyed with Polina for breaking in on his talk with Nikolai. "You did right to expose Chumov, of course, but there's no point in flaring up about every little thing."

The tea-pot had long been cold. Ksenia lay asleep in her mother's arms. It was growing late. Autumn was approaching and the yellowing leaves rustled drily outside the window; a shooting star described a brilliant arc across the sky.

Valya was sitting at the window. Vladimir and Polina sat smoking at the table. Polina did not smoke as a rule, but now she had lit a cigarette and held it, her little finger sticking out. Valya realized that Polina was trying to make herself look different from other girls and that she thought smoking was something specially *chic*. But there was

nothing *chic* about the way Polina smoked: she drew short puffs, not at all like Vladimir who inhaled deeply.

At last the visitors rose and left. Valya smiled and nodded to them through the window as Vladimir saw them to the gate. The village was quiet; most people had gone to bed for the night; only at the Syurtukovs' and in one or two other houses lights were burning.

Nikolai saw Polina back to her hostel and walked on to the Stalin-grad. He wondered what Andrei was doing. Recently Andrei had seemed sad; he wrote home to his father every day, sat up writing poetry that he never showed to Nikolai. Nor, for that matter, had he shown Nikolai an article he had sent to a Moscow paper. Perhaps he thought it mightn't be printed. A long time had passed since Andrei had sent the article but there'd been no reply....

Nikolai whistled cheerfully as he walked down the well-lit street. He knew every house; in practically everyone of them lived a friend. He passed the hospital where Valya's baby was born. There were no lights burning in the maternity ward but the windows were open as they had been that night. And that window at the side with the white net curtain glowed brightly as it had done then.

The gate of the hospital grounds creaked and a woman in a white smock with a navy-blue jacket over her shoulders stepped out on to the pavement. She walked at an easy pace a little way ahead of Nikolai, passing in and out of pools of light from the lamp standards. Her neat, slender figure reminded Nikolai of the one he knew and loved so well. It couldn't be Nina, could it? Yet who but Nina could walk so lightly and swing her arm like that? And wasn't that her old attaché case? And whose hair could fluff out like that except Nina's?

Nikolai stopped and drew a deep breath. The distance between them lengthened. Nikolai's feet felt leaden but he made an effort and raced ahead. He felt like shouting "Nina" but no sound came.

Nina had not written for a long time. Every morning Nikolai had expected a letter giving him her new address; he was beginning to think he had lost her for ever.

"Nina! Is it you?" he called at last.

"Of course it is. Who did you mistake me for?"

How could he mistake those dancing eyes, that teasing voice? Swinging her attaché case, Nina stood before him, as precious and desirable as she had ever been in Moscow.

"Nina darling! Where've you sprung from?"

"I've been on duty in the maternity ward. Now I'm going home to my room."

"Home! You're joking."

"No, I'm not. I've been working here since yesterday."

Nina's voice sounded calm but her hand betrayed her feelings as it tugged and twisted her scarf. They were standing under a street standard—a cluster of glazed lamps cast a brilliant light which showed up every feature of their faces, so moved by this unexpected meeting.

"Why on earth didn't you write and tell me?"

"What for? Just to get another detailed description of the lovely weather and the scenery? I decided to come and see it all for myself."

She stood with her hands in her pockets, the familiar old jacket flung over her shoulders, the wind stirring her hair. Two young men passed by and looked hard at her.

Nikolai grasped Nina firmly by the arm. How strange it was to be walking with her through the streets, past the factory and the Stalingrad, where a light was burning in his room. So Andrei was home. Nikolai did not ask Nina in: he wanted to be alone with her, did not want to share, even with Andrei, the first hour of their miraculous, unexpected meeting. He asked Nina no more questions, simply walked in silence at her side, drawing her ever more closely to him.

"Are you in a hurry to get back?" he said when they reached the park. "Wouldn't you like to walk a bit longer?"

Nina nodded and they turned into the park. The tobacco-plants were flowering for the last time and their white star-shaped flowers gleamed in the darkness. Far away at the dance floor the band was playing its signing-off march; a noisy crowd was streaming along the central walk towards the exit, Nikolai caught sight of Lyuba and automatically looked for Andrei. Odd that Andrei wasn't with her: Lyuba was in a group of young factory workers and at her side there was a man Nikolai did not know.

"That path goes straight to the lake. Should we go and look at the lake, Nina?"

"Let's," said Nina. "And I'd like to go out in a boat."

Where were they to find a boat at this hour? The boatman had gone home and the boats were all tied up to the bank with the oars put away in the boat-house. Nikolai tried the door: to his delight it yielded—the padlock was only for appearance's sake.

"Take the oars," he said to Nina. "Look, those long ones."

Stooping cautiously, Nina went in: was it all right to take the oars without permission? What if the night watchman should turn up suddenly and make a fuss?

"He won't come," Nikolai assured her. "He's asleep long ago. The boat'll be safe enough with us. We'll go for a row and put everything back where we found it."

To unmoor a boat was even simpler; the painter was merely hitched round a stake. Nina stepped daintily in; Nikolai cast off from the landing-stage and they were floating on the smooth dark waters of the lake. How lightly the boat moved! How freely the oars rose and fell! How happy, strong and powerful Nikolai felt!

He looked at Nina: her face seemed to him pale and drawn. Could she have been lonely without him? Perhaps after all she wasn't so indifferent to him as he had imagined.

"How did you happen to get appointed to this very hospital, Nina?" Nikolai asked. "Did you ask specially or did it just happen?"

"What d'you think? D'you really imagine that out of the thousands of hospitals I might have gone to, I came here just by chance? Hey, look out, you've caught a crab. Sit still, you'll upset the boat."

But Nikolai had forgotten all about the boat. He slid off the thwart and sat down in the bottom of the boat at Nina's feet.

"So you came to find me, Nina darling," he whispered. "Is that really true? And here was I thinking. . . . Oh, what a fool I am, Nina, what a fool! Come on, give me a clout if you feel like it."



He pressed his lips to her hands, to her knees, to the white smock about which still clung an odour of medicine, of the familiar smells of the hospital. Even Nina's hands smelt of the hospital, but her face, her throat, her curly hair were fragrant with the scent of spring flowers.

"Ninotchka," Nikolai murmured. "Ninotchka. . . My darling, dearest, most precious. . ."

The night was over and the sky was growing light. A fisherman's canoe glided out of the reeds. It passed them silently—the lovers sat wrapped in each other's arms on the oarsman's seat, a navy-blue jacket over their shoulders; and the head of the girl lay submissively on the young man's shoulder.

"Ah, youth, youth," sighed the fisherman enviously. "That's the time for loving."

The sun was rising when Nikolai burst into the room. Andrei lay with a book in his hands; the lamp stood burning on the desk although the sun struck straight through the window.

"Andrei, I've got news for you. I'm going to get married," Nikolai shouted as he came in.

Andrei silently laid his book aside. His cheeks were hollow and there were dark shadows under his eyes as if he had passed through a serious illness; his eyes were sad.

"She's here," said Nikolai who noticed nothing. "She's come to work at the factory hospital."

Nikolai wanted to describe to Andrei how he had met Nina, and how he had told her at long last the things he had wanted to tell her in Moscow, and how Nina had replied that she had long been waiting for those words. Nikolai was so full of happiness that everything seemed marvellous and unusual to him—the dawn, the yellow leaves on the trees, his friendship with Andrei.

He slipped off his jacket, sat on the edge of Andrei's bed and looked into his friend's face; and only then did he notice how weary-looking that face was and how strange, almost tearful an expression burned in Andrei's eyes.

"What's wrong?" he asked in alarm. "What's happened?"

Andrei said that nothing in particular had happened: he wasn't feeling well, hadn't been able to sleep and now his head ached.

"Don't mind me," he said with a smile. "I'm really glad about what you've told me. Really glad."

His smile was forced and weak but Nikolai was so blinded by the egoism of happiness that he noticed nothing. He attributed everything to illness and at once hurried into the corridor where a first-aid cabinet hung, found a headache powder and made Andrei take it.

"Tomorrow—I mean today—I'll bring Nina to see you," he said. "She'll get you well in a tick, you'll see."

Andrei closed his eyes and pretended to go to sleep; Nikolai, moving quietly so as not to disturb him, undressed and got into bed. He thought he would not be able to sleep but he fell off at once with a happy smile on his lips.

2

Shortly after Zhukov's visit to Verkhnyaya Kamenka, Stoletov and Andrei went in search of the prototype of the "shrew."

They found the machine in the farthest reaches of the factory grounds, in a place where the tree-stumps had not yet been rooted up and the young pine trees felled. From a distance it looked rather like a piece of artillery with the long barrel-like snout and the heavy caterpillars deeply embedded in the ground.

They looked the machine over, startling a flock of sparrows out of the driver's cab. The broad cutting-blade in the front of the machine was buried in earth over which the grass grew densely, the caterpillars were rusty and the transporter appeared to be partly dismantled.

"I can see now why Kovalev was so unwilling to show this to me," said Stoletov. "It really is a sorry sight.... Don't you think it would be a good idea, Andrei Borisovich, to tell the whole story of this invention in a long detailed article?"

"But we covered the subject with that letter from the designers, didn't we?"

"I'm not thinking of the *Tribuna* now. I mean an article for the Moscow press."

He looked at Andrei searchingly: would he agree to write the truth about the Kovalev invention? Would he be willing to expose the discreditable behaviour of Zhukov senior, the father of his friend? Would he have the courage to write a trenchant, hard-hitting article?

"You ought to put everything in," he went on. "The disgraceful vacillation; the story of the Kurzhen excavator which is being pushed solely because it's the brain child of the head office which includes Zhukov. Perhaps it's worth mentioning that Zhukov came here and tried to get the factory to drop its campaign for the Kovalev machine. Could you write an article about that, d'you think?"

"Of course I could," said Andrei. "And as for Zhukov I know him a good deal better than you do, Stepan Demyanovich."

Stoletov walked from the machine to a patch of shade under a skimpy pine and sat on the grass. Andrei sat down beside him and told him excitedly how this Zhukov had abandoned his family years before, how much Nik had missed his father and how he had envied Andrei in

this respect. Andrei mentioned the letter of introduction Zhukov had given his son, being sure Kovalev would help him.

"He knew at that time there wasn't a hope of Kovalev's invention being taken up. D'you see what I mean? He knew that, because he'd secured support for his own invention. He knew, because he's a leading official at head office. He knew how difficult it was—practically impossible—for Kovalev to push his own invention from outside Moscow. A good thing that Nikolai didn't want to use his father's influence and he tore up that letter. . . . But please, don't tell Kovalev that Nikolai is Zhukov's son."

"He knows," said Stoletov. "Zhukov told him when he was here. Kovalev respects your friend for not using the letter. . . ."

Time passed. The shade shifted. The heat grew oppressive; but neither Andrei nor Stoletov noticed it. They went on talking about Nikolai and Sharov and the young people of Verkhnyaya Kamenka and all the many fine people who worked at the factory.

Both of them found the conversation interesting and pleasant and were sorry when it was interrupted by the dinner-break hooter. Stoletov hurried away to keep his traditional "hour of the open door"; Andrei went to the Comsomol committee room to tell Lyuba about everything. But Lyuba was not in. A lean fellow who worked at the forge sat at her desk writing something with a sour look on his face.

"Zvonaryeva left for town," he told Andrei. "Pretended the district committee office had sent for her. But they rang up from there a short while ago and asked for her to tell them how the oil workers' order was going on. What can I do? She rushed away as if she'd lost her senses and didn't leave a thing for me. Maybe you can help."

Andrei was not particularly disconcerted by Lyuba's absence. It was even better so. He would sit down and write the article. He would finish it by the time she returned and she would be its first reader.

He spent the evening over the article. There was enough material for a booklet. When he had finished, he rang up Lyuba's room only to be told by her room-mate that she had not returned. She was not back the following morning either and Stoletov was the first to read the article. Stoletov liked it and said that it ought to be posted to Moscow without delay.

"I'm sure it'll be published. Send it air mail. It'll reach the paper tomorrow. Then we start looking for it when the Moscow papers come in." He found a large blue envelope, put the article in it and said jokingly: "Touch wood."

After posting the letter Andrei dropped into the Comsomol office again. Lyuba was not there; a man's cap lay on her desk; a typist was copying the details of the oil workers' order.

"You don't happen to know where Zvonaryeva is, do you?" asked Andrei as he glanced through the material. "Didn't she say when she was coming back?"

"She's here," said the typist with a knowing look. "But she went out again as soon as she arrived. Maybe she's gone to your office."

But Lyuba was not at the *Tribuna*. Vanya Poperechny had seen her with the manager of the building department—she'd probably gone to see how they were getting on with the new house. Andrei would like to have

gone in search of her straight away but he had to see the paper to press, ring up the designing office and write an editorial. That took him several hours. Lyuba could easily have come to his office during that time but there was no sign of her.

Then Andrei wrote her a note:

"Where have you got to, Lyuba? This is a special day for me: I've sent an article to Moscow. I very much wanted you to be the first to read it but I could not find you in. I long to see you; I can't live without you. Come to me Lyuba my love. Your Andrei."

He placed the note on Lyuba's desk and went back to his work, all the time expecting Lyuba to come.

But still she did not come. Andrei saw her only in the evening and then by mere chance: they met by the factory gates. Andrei, delighted, hurried towards her.

"Where've you been?" he asked, grasping her hand. "I looked for you yesterday and all today. . . . I've got heaps of news."

"I went into town," Lyuba said, in a worried tone, avoiding Andrei's eyes. "Excuse me but I'm in a hurry now: I have a young workers' technical conference to go to in the new machine shop."

"Come to the *Tribuna* office afterwards," Andrei begged, not releasing her hand. "Did you find my note?"

"Yes," said Lyuba and, snatching her hand away, she hurried through the gates.

"Lyuba," cried Andrei. "Wait a minute."

But she did not hear him, or pretended not to. She hastened on, head down as if she wanted to ward off some invisible menace or felt ashamed of something. Andrei took a few steps after her, then, noticing the look of sympathy on the face of the girl gate-keeper, realized that Lyuba did not want to see him.

Andrei walked back to his office, sat down and stared blankly at an article Vanya handed him. Vanya was explaining something, he was excited and indignant, but Andrei did not take in a word.

"I'm sorry," he interrupted, "I've got a headache. We'll print that tomorrow."

He went out and waited in the garden for work to finish and everybody to leave. He could not believe that Lyuba would drop him without a word of explanation: she was sure to come after her conference and explain what had happened.

When Andrei returned to the office he found it dark and empty. The only sound came from the print-shop where the printer was finishing a job for the management. Andrei switched on the light and sat down at his desk listening to the steps in the passage, to voices in the factory yard, to the rain pattering on the roof. A clean sheet of paper lay in front of him: he meant to write to his father about the article but did not get beyond putting the date in the right-hand corner.

Would she come? And if so, what would she say? Why had she looked so scared to see him at the factory gates?

He had waited for Lyuba on other occasions but never for long; he would hear her light steps in the passage and in she would come saying to him from the door: "Hello, what's the news today?" She meant: "What's in the paper?" but Andrei's eyes would reply, "I love you, I love you." Could she have failed to understand what his eyes had told her?

The minutes dragged on. The clock went on ticking. The weights had almost touched the floor; he would have to wind it up. Andrei rose, started to wind up the clock, when suddenly the door opened.

Lyuba came into the office as she had done dozens of times before. She wore that familiar blue frock, the knitted jumper with red buttons—one of them she had lost not long ago and Andrei had looked for it in the grass. She had no hat on and her hair was arranged differently—more simply and smoothly. Her face, too, seemed different, she looked very resolute as if she were about to take a high dive into cold water.

Andrei tried to force a smile but it was unnatural and soon faded. "I knew you'd come. I've been waiting such a long time."

How many times had Lyuba sat on that wooden bench beneath the picture of Lenin, waiting for Andrei to finish his work? And now she sat there again, leaning against the high hard back of the bench, her elbow resting on the little table as usual.

For some time not a word was spoken. Lyuba stared at the dark window; the clock slowly ticked off the seconds....

"Tell me, Andrei, is it true... what you wrote in that note?"

"Yes, it's true. Why should I tell you something that isn't true?"

"I didn't mean that. But—perhaps you exaggerated...."

"I didn't exaggerate anything. I love you."

Andrei rose to his feet, walked across the room and sat down beside Lyuba. He tried to take her hand but she pretended to smooth a crease in her frock and edged away from him.

"Didn't you like to find that out, Lyuba?"

He looked at her searchingly and saw the colour flood her cheeks.

"It wouldn't be true if I said no," Lyuba said in a low voice. "Every girl likes to know she is loved.... But, Andrei dear, I love someone else."

She raised her head and her clear candid eyes met Andrei's. He did not utter a word. There was pain and longing in his eyes. Only the patter of the rain on the window disturbed the quiet in the room.

Lyuba expected Andrei to reproach her, to raise his voice, to stamp out of the room, slamming the door behind him. But he asked no questions, did not go away. He fixed his eyes on something far, far away and his lips twisted in a strange, painful smile.

"That's all," Lyuba whispered. She could stand the silence no longer. "That's all. Perhaps I should have told you about it earlier. You've every right to consider that I've treated you shabbily and that I've been a little coward."

"Nothing could make me think that," said Andrei hoarsely. "Nothing. You know that very well.... But tell me one thing, Lyuba, didn't you love me at all?"

With lowered head, fighting back the tears that came to her eyes, she tried to explain, to tell him how it all had come about. Whose fault had it been? That was a very hard question to answer.

"You see, I've been in love with him for a long time. He loves me too, really seriously. But he's been away for some months on an assembly job, and then you came and it all started.... I saw it at once, I realized the way you felt about me and I also began to think, began to...."

Lyuba spoke haltingly, almost inaudibly. How was she to explain that she had struggled with herself: she had wanted to see him, yet she

had avoided meeting him: she had wanted to respond to his kiss, yet she had been afraid to; she had wanted to be honest and deceive no one, yet she had deceived herself. It was hard to tell all that, but told it had to be.

"Don't think I'm trying to make excuses. Believe me, it's not easy for me; I've paid dearly for being so vain and for not being straight with you. I felt flattered that someone like you should like me. . . . I lost my head, I forgot everything and then I came to my senses and told myself it had to stop."

"Perhaps you were wrong?"

There was hope in Andrei's voice; he grasped Lyuba's hand and tried to turn her towards him. But she withdrew her hand, rose and walked to the door.

"No, I wasn't wrong," she said. "It's not you I love, Andrei. Forgive me and don't think too badly of me."

That was how Lyuba broke with Andrei.

For several days Andrei could not control his sorrow. He lived like an automaton, mechanically doing all he had to do: he worked because the print-shop needed material for the paper; he went to the canteen because it was dinner time; he went to bed because it was bed time. But the only thing he really felt was the misfortune that had befallen him. It was so unexpected. There was nobody he could talk to about it, he had to bear his grief alone. Again and again he relived every moment he had spent with Lyuba, and each time it was more painful. He kept asking himself the same questions, but could find no answers.

How had it all happened? It seemed to him now that he had fallen in love with Lyuba on the day of his arrival when he saw her come, angry and tearful, into the Party committee room. Then, or perhaps at that Comsomol meeting where the oil workers' letter had been discussed? Or in the woods near that stream when she had not responded to his kiss? But did it really matter when? Love had possessed him utterly and that was something Lyuba must have noticed.

But why had he not noticed that she was in love with somebody else? He should have done. Why, Lyuba herself had mentioned an assembly worker called Grisha who had been to the same technical school; she'd grown friendly with him, wrote to him now that he was away. She'd often mentioned him but Andrei hadn't attached any special significance to her words.

And then, hadn't she always been curiously reluctant to talk about love, never letting him kiss her and at once becoming stern and unapproachable whenever he tried? And what was it that Dusya used to sing so often in that mocking way of hers? "In vain, my friend, you walk this way." Yes, that was all true but he'd been deaf and blind to it all—he hadn't noticed a thing. . . .

And now, when he loved her more than ever, everything became clear. It was a blow he found hard to take; he could not share his feelings even with Nikolai. And that morning when Nikolai came dashing into the room, his friend's joy left him unmoved. He listened indifferently and then waited for Nikolai to fall asleep. And then he decided to go outside. But where? It was Sunday, the office was closed, there was no work to do. Yet he simply had to go out. Andrei slipped quietly out of bed, dressed and shut the door behind him.

He walked down the street. The pale autumn sun gilded the walls of the building opposite. A crowd of school children were pouring through the doors of a shop to buy pencils, notebooks, satchels. Andrei walked into the shop aimlessly.

"I want a notebook, please," he said, when he caught the assistant's eye over the heads of the children. "One of those with the black cover."

Then he walked along a narrow path between thick old elms towards the forest. The path wound its way up to the top of the hill. Flattened rocks jutted over it. Nettles and wild raspberries grew among the stones. The earth was dry and slid in a gentle rustle under Andrei's feet.

Scrambling up the last stony stretch, Andrei reached the top of the hill. An eagle had only just taken off from there, for a feather still fluttered on a boulder and the eagle could be seen flying over the tree tops with lazy sweeps of its wings. The woods stretched all around, deep green, yellow, red. They swallowed up all paths and roads so that there was nothing to be seen but sky and foliage.

Andrei sat on a sun-warmed rock and rested his eyes on a small twisted birch tree with scanty copper-coloured leaves. That tree would never grow up into one of those slender well-proportioned birches that you saw down below. It would always be twisted, wizened, impoverished. Farther down the hill slope the birches had not yet shed their leaves or changed their colour; only a few yellowing streaks appeared among the green, like an ageing man's grey hairs. . . .

Where was Lyuba now? Perhaps she was walking along that very road which led to the river, there where that great boulder protruded. Once she had sat on that boulder, her face tilted to the sun—to that same sun that was shining today. . . .

3

Early the next morning Andrei was awakened by Sasha, the hostel warden, bursting into the room.

"Telegram for you," he announced exultantly.

There were only four words in the telegram: "Congratulations article published Dad."

Sasha beamed at Andrei. How proud he was to have such a man living at the Stalingrad!

Nikolai too was delighted.

"Why, it's wonderful, Andrei," he said. "Let's see, the telegram was sent last night. That means yesterday's paper. It'll reach here this afternoon. Be sure to bring a copy to the shop. Just as soon as it arrives."

Nikolai was in a hurry to get to work. He ran out of the room and took the stairs three at a time. He felt happy and light-hearted, pleased with everything in the world: Nina loved him, things were going better in the shop, the mountain tops were capped with marvellous clouds, even the light drizzle had something pleasing about it. Everything was beautiful, splendid to the last degree. Everything except for. . . . Ah, Lyuba Zvonaryeva was the only fly in the ointment. To think that she could prefer a tow-headed fellow from the assembly shop to Andrei. . . . True, people said they'd been friends a long time, that it was an old love affair; but if that was so why had Lyuba turned Andrei's head?

Dusya had called the relations between Andrei and Lyuba "lyrical friendship." "What if that Andrei of yours had chosen to fall in love with me?" she asked Nikolai. "D'you think I'd have to leave my Vasya just so as not to disappoint Andrei? There's such a thing as lyrical friendship between people, isn't there? Lyuba was certain that was the kind of friendship she had with Andrei. It's not her fault that he fell in love with her."

But Nikolai saw things differently. This "lyrical friendship" business was Dusya's invention to take the blame off Lyuba. Of course Lyuba was to blame. Who if not he was the one to know that? He'd heard with his own ears how Lyuba talked to Andrei. "The moon looks like a boat." One doesn't say things like that—and in such a voice—just to a friend. A good thing that article of Andrei's was printed. It might take his mind off the other matter.

But it didn't. True, when someone brought him the newspaper and he read his name at the foot of a two-column article, Andrei felt something akin to joy and pride. But what pleasure he took in the fact was short-lived; he thought of Lyuba even when he was reading the article. It was all the same to her whether the article had appeared or not. If only Lyuba were pleased to see that article. . . .

Lyuba, in fact, was delighted. She came into the *Tribuna* office waving the paper, congratulated Andrei and said that now Kovalev would feel better about things. What a pity he was on his holidays.

"He's back," said Vanya Poperechny. "I saw him in the shop earlier on."

"Go and see him, Andrei. Straight away," said Lyuba. "He probably hasn't read the paper yet. By the way, does Nikolai mind the way you've criticized his father?"

The mention of Nikolai reminded Andrei that he had not shown him the article yet. How could he have overlooked that? He'd been so wrapped up in his own misfortune that he'd forgotten all about Nikolai. He made straight for the turnery.

"Has the paper come? Got it? Hand it over, let's see it," Nikolai said smiling broadly.

"I haven't got it with me, Nik. I must talk to you for a moment."

"What? Now? Wouldn't it do after work?"

"No, it's got to be now."

It was hard to broach a subject which was bound to cause Nikolai pain. But a start had to be made and Andrei forced himself to tell the hard truth about the Kurzhen machine and the part Zhukov had played in the affair, and how he, Andrei, had to write that truth and how it had been published in the Moscow press the day before.

Many fleeting expressions crossed Nikolai's pale face as he sat there and listened to Andrei's tale. They were sitting on the broad window-sill next to Nikolai's section near a number of lathes on which fluttered the red pennants that were the mark of victory in Socialist emulation. Bending down over the cutting tool, Yelena Protasova was at work on one of these lathes; near by, Vladimir Nazarenko, head tilted, was scrutinizing a part he had just turned. The lathes ran with a smooth hum.

"I should have told you about it earlier," said Andrei. "But somehow I didn't. Don't be sore with me, I'm feeling bad enough as it is."

Nikolai shook his head in silence. Why should he feel sore with Andrei? He looked at Yelena Protasova, at Syurtukov who passed by with a smile and a friendly wave of the hand. He thought of Nina who would read that article and asked himself how she would be taking the references to his father.

"I ought to tell Nina about it," he said. "A pity I didn't know earlier. What if she should think I've been keeping it from her."

"I'll tell her myself if you like. I'll go and see her straight away."

"No, I'll tell her. . . . Don't think this worries me very much. After all, you know my relations with my father."

If all this had happened before Nina had come to Verkhnyaya Kamenka, he would probably have found it more painful and unpleasant. But now his happiness was so abundant, so overflowing, that it would be difficult, well-nigh impossible, to spoil his mood. Andrei, maybe, couldn't understand that: he had no Nina. . . .

"I don't care a damn about that Kurzhen of his," said Nikolai. "I'll be delighted if Kovalev turns out to be the winner in the end. Don't give any ground, Andrei; insist on getting a reply out of the Ministry. And don't imagine that I could get sore with you about a thing like that. . . . Now give me the paper, it's sticking out of your pocket."

4

In the *Tribuna* appeared the following message from the oil workers: "The first machines have arrived. The quality is excellent. Thank you. Please let us know the names of the best workers on this order. We wish to put them on our board of honour."

In the next column appeared the names of the best workers. It was a long list including foundry workers, riveters, turners and assembly workers. Nikolai's name was there: his section was among the first in the machining process.

Nobody knew for certain whether all those names would appear on the oil workers' board of honour, but the *Tribuna* gave the full list and, moreover, framed it with a fancy border. The chairman of the factory trade-union committee let it be known that the list would be considered when the question arose of whose pictures were to be put up in the square for the anniversary of the Revolution celebrations in November.

Nikolai was very proud to be among the leading workers. In the evening he snatched the newspaper from Andrei's hand and took it, still damp from the press, to show Nina. On the way he tried to think up some excuse for coming to see her so late in the evening: he felt slightly ashamed to have to admit the real reason. He decided to ask her to mend a hole in the pocket of his jacket. That was a wife's job, wasn't it?

What an odd thing it was! Here they were married, yet, he had to admit to himself, he still felt a little afraid of her, Nina ruled the roost all right. . . .

Nina lived at the hospital in a room looking rather like a ward itself with its narrow beds, glossy white stools and bedside lockers. She shared this room with Zina, a girl of her own age who worked as a dental surgeon. Zina, however, was hardly ever in; she spent every evening at the club or the cinema or else went into town to visit a girl friend, and then she would stay overnight. She was out this time too. Nina was alone,

sitting at a small table on which a sheet served as table-cloth. She was writing a letter home.

"I was afraid you might be asleep," said Nikolai, kissing her. "It's simply awful living apart like this. It's so dull, and I have to come all this way for every little trifle."

He slipped off his jacket and complained that there was a hole in the pocket: why, he'd almost lost an important paper that very day; he'd wanted to mend it himself but couldn't find his needle. And, anyway, it seemed funny—a married man having to mend his own clothes.

"It's not at all funny," said Nina, looking at the tear. "In the first place, this ought to have been mended long ago. Secondly, needles are not made to be lost. What if it should turn up in your bed? You'd soon know what it was if it pricked you."

She opened a prettily painted box, slipped a thimble on her finger and got ready to start sewing.

"Wait a minute; let me empty my pocket first," said Nikolai, taking out a wallet and the folded newspaper. "By the way, that's tomorrow's *Tribuna*, if you're interested."

"I'm not," said Nina testily. "I'm never going to read that horrid paper again. Andrei ought to be ashamed of himself. Goes and prints an inaccurate, ill-tempered article about the hospital and then doesn't print our denial."

"Maybe it's in this very number," said Nikolai slyly. "I'll leave it for you, if you like."

"I'm not going to read it, I tell you. You needn't try to make me change my mind."

"But that article wasn't all wrong," objected Nikolai. "I remember it: you were in too much of a hurry to send someone back to work and then he had a relapse and the polyclinic put him back in bed."

"If that patient hadn't gone out digging potatoes the day after he left hospital, he wouldn't have fallen ill again. We reckoned on him doing light work in the shop and off he goes to his allotment. That article was written by a doctor in the polyclinic who's always slinging mud at the hospital. And Andrei prints it without even checking the facts at the hospital."

Nina's hand moved to and fro, drawing the black thread through the air; her silver thimble glittered in the bright light that came from a table-lamp with a net shade. She looked angry.

"D'you understand what that patient did or don't you?" she asked, tapping the table with the thimble. "He spoiled our work. We took care of him, gave him the best treatment, nursed him, and then he goes and spoils it all. What would you say if someone took a delicate piece of machinery and used it to crush stones with?"

"You should have warned him to go carefully."

"Warn him? That's just the point. We did. He was anxious to get back to work, so we let him go, but Maria Borisovna gave him quite a lecture before she signed him out. And now it appears that the only reason he wanted to leave us so quickly was to dig his potatoes. I'm furious with Andrei for the attitude he took and I'd like you to tell him so."

Nikolai looked at Nina solemnly but held his tongue. Hadn't they an agreement that Andrei was to be considered their closest friend, practi-

cally a member of the family? So why was Nina jumping on Andrei because of some article or other? That broke their agreement, didn't it?

Not long ago Andrei had printed an article criticizing Nikolai's work. Of course, that had stung Nikolai considerably but he hadn't lost his wool about it and never let the idea enter his head that Andrei ought to let him down lightly because they were friends. Was the fact that Nina happened to work at the hospital any reason why Andrei shouldn't print a criticism of it?

His face expressionless, Nikolai unfolded the paper and glanced through it. The panel with the names of the leading workers looked most effective. That was Polina's work and she'd done it proud. It really was nice to see one's own name there. "N. N. Zhukov— foreman of turning section." Was Nina going to miss that?

But, though Nikolai did not notice it, Nina was looking not at the paper but at him.

"I have every right to feel angry with Andrei," she said stubbornly. "You know that very well."

Her voice had an edge to it, but when Nikolai looked up from the paper she had dropped her eyes; she was nipping the thread with her teeth.

"The only thing I know is that our agreement is still in force. Stop being angry, Nina darling, and stop mending that wretched hole. I'll keep my papers in another pocket."

"I don't want you to go round looking like a scarecrow. Holes are meant to be mended."

Nina spoke in her best schoolmarm's manner, and went on sewing. She must have inherited that tone from her mother or her grandmother. "Holes are meant to be mended." "You've got to take a bath at least once a week." "Shoes have to be cleaned every day." And so forth and so on. Copy-book maxims that he'd heard in his childhood till he was sick to death of them. What if he didn't have time to clean his shoes every day? What if he preferred to spend the time he saved in the shop? Or to run to the hospital and wait till Nina was free after an operation? Why should she start nagging him about his shoes instead of responding to his kiss?

"You admire Andrei so much," said Nina caustically, "that I just don't understand why you don't copy the best quality he has— that of always being neat and tidy. Andrei's always spick and span, but you go around unshaven and, what's more, think I like you for it."

Nikolai distractedly raised his hand to his chin. Nina was right: he *did* need a shave. He'd meant to drop in to the barber's but he'd been in such a hurry to see Nina that he'd forgotten.

"Very well, next time I'll come shaved and scented but I'll be an hour later, you realize."

"That'll suit me all right."

Why was Nina so irritable? Why was her voice getting more and more strained? Why, when she had mended the torn lining, did she toss the coat on the chair like that?

"There you are," she said, avoiding Nikolai's eyes. "You can put it on now."

"Thank you, I'll not trouble you with such things in future."

Nina cast him a scornful look and pointedly resumed her unfinished

letter. She jabbed the pen into the ink-pot, pondered for a moment and started to write. . . .

If they lived together, if this room was their home, Nikolai wouldn't have felt hurt at Nina going on writing. But now he was a guest whose visit might be interrupted at any moment by Zina's arrival. Oh no, this was too much.

In silent rage Nikolai put on his jacket, picked up his cap and took his overcoat off the hanger.

"Good-bye," he said drily.

Nina did not even look up. Apparently he wasn't worth a glance, let alone a good-night kiss. All right, let it be. He wasn't going to eat humble pie before her.

The night was cold and clear. The stars shone brightly, frost lay on the dry grass, the trees had nearly all shed their leaves. Only the poplars remained green and dense, as in summer. Nikolai ran along the long avenue of poplars from the hospital to the main gates, thinking that Nina was obviously not in love with him. She was using every opportunity to humiliate him, to assert her superiority, to underline that she was perfect and he a mere worm.

She hadn't wanted to look at the list of honour in the paper—no need to. Instead, she'd given him a lecture as if he were a little boy.

What was to be done about it? The main thing was to work in such a way that she'd realize the sort of man she was dealing with. No slip of a student whom she could boss but the foreman of a large section, a man respected and appreciated. Next, he would have to be curt and independent with her. And lastly, he wouldn't rush to the hospital to see her; let her come to the Stalingrad; let her feel lonely, let her cry a bit for him.

But if she didn't feel lonely? If she didn't cry, but only got more angry?

When Nikolai reached the Stalingrad he saw the light burning in his room. What a good thing Andrei hadn't gone to sleep yet. He'd tell him the whole story, explain how Nina had been behaving the last few days, how hard he found it, how she had hurt him. Andrei would understand everything, he'd tell him what to do, help him. . . .

"So that's how things are, Andrei. What shall I do next?"

Andrei put his book aside, stroked his cheek and looked at the dark, uncurtained window.

"I really don't know, Nik. You've probably got to learn to respect each other, to trust and love each other. Although sometimes things go completely wrong even when you believe in someone, even when you love someone. . . ."

The window was blank; the mountains, the lake, the opposite shore, all were swallowed up in the darkness. The window panes reflected the table-lamp, a pile of crumpled papers, and Andrei's face.

"She's always bossing me, treats me like a little boy. And I'm not going to stand it. Especially when it comes to matters of principle. I'm not going to yield except on little things that don't matter."

"But what matters of principle do you quarrel about?"

"Every quarrel we have comes down to a matter of principle. She wants to be the boss. But I understand things as well as she does, don't

"Today she was furious with you about that article of yours on the hospital. Looked at the question from her own narrow point of view and didn't want to see she was wrong. I can't agree with her on that sort of thing...."

"That's all nonsense, Nik. Tomorrow you'll make it up and be happy.... There's something else you ought to be thinking about, though—how soon you can set up house together."

Together.... Andrei had no idea how often Nina and Nikolai had talked about the way things would be when all three of them lived together under the same roof. Nikolai did not want to move anywhere unless Andrei came with them. What they dreamed about was not a bed-sitter but a flat of two or three rooms where they could all live. Nina raised no objections to that. She agreed to wait for a flat.

But recently Nina had been saying more and more often that she felt lonely in the evenings when Nikolai wasn't with her and she had to listen to Zina's chatter instead of being able to say something important to Nikolai. Once Nina even cried on parting with Nikolai; it'd been so lovely sitting there quietly, just the two of them, and then Zina came bursting in with some girl-friend of hers and their privacy was shattered.

So Nina burst into tears when she saw Nikolai to the gate. They sat on a garden bench out there with Nina's overcoat over them, because Nikolai had come without his overcoat and it had started drizzling. But even in the rain the narrow bench in the hospital garden was better than anywhere else, because they were alone there.

"I'm afraid we'll have to wait a long time for a separate flat," Nina complained. "All we two need is a small single room."

Nikolai hugged her hard and kissed her rain-spangled hair.

"We'll manage to wait, darling. We must wait. We can't let old Andrei down, specially now he's in trouble and is so much on his own."

Andrei could not be allowed to know of this conversation. Nikolai never mentioned his plans to him: let Andrei consider him a bungler, let him think that Nina and he couldn't arrange things properly for themselves.

"It's not because we're living apart that we quarrel like this," Nikolai said firmly. "And don't you try and push me out of here."

Chapter Fourteen

1

A nurse in the surgical ward mentioned that there was some inexpensive silk on sale in the shop.

"It's lovely. Dark blue with polka dots. Just suit you, Tonya. You haven't got one pretty frock."

Antonina dragged her suitcase from under the bed, counted her savings and came to the conclusion that she could easily afford to get herself a new dress. She'd have it made in time for the November holidays. She knew somebody across the lake who'd make her a really pretty one and wouldn't charge much.

Putting the money in her bag, Antonina hurried to the shop. It was a sunny morning with a touch of frost whitening the brown grass and mak-

ing the sand scrunch underfoot. As she ran she looked for the frozen puddles, for she liked to break the brittle surface with her feet.

Everything, indeed, pleased her that morning: the blue, summery sky and the cool, scented air and the refreshing feeling she felt in every limb. On the previous day she had gone to the public baths, soaped herself thoroughly and even taken a steam bath; she had slept well and now felt unusually light-hearted and happy. As she ran she hummed a song she had just heard over the wireless, a song about a girl who is trying to talk a certain Seryozha into taking her out. Seryozha replies very seriously that he is much too busy with the harvest just now but that afterwards he'd be happy to kiss her till morn.

For some reason, Antonina did not care for that Seryozha whom she imagined not as a young fellow but as a shrivelled, middle-aged man with a reddish stubble on his chin. The tune was pretty, though, and the words had stuck in her memory.

She ran through the park, where there was not a soul to be seen that chilly Sunday morning. The place looked neglected, unwelcoming. The benches had been stacked on the band-stand where the band used to play in the summer, the kiosks and booths were boarded up. True, the pine trees looked as beautiful as ever, but the shrubs were thin and quite leafless: the wind had carried all the foliage away.

"But after the harvest we'll kiss till the morn," Antonina sang at the top of her voice. Suddenly she faltered and came to an abrupt stop: at a bend in the path lay a man. He wore a light-coloured shirt, his jacket was unbuttoned, and over his legs an overcoat had been thrown. He lay with his legs drawn up and his head leaning against the foot of the tree. He seemed to be asleep.

There was nothing to be frightened of, Antonina assured herself and walked on. What if the man were ill and needed some first aid?

She drew nearer and suddenly recognized Yasha. He was snoring, drunk probably. His shirt was badly stained, his face bruised and dirty, his cap had fallen off and in his glossy dark hair were bits of withered grass.

Petrified, Antonina stood over the sleeping Yasha. She had not seen him for a long time; she had avoided meeting him, she didn't want to see him, she was afraid. And now they had met like this! Yasha lay there, looking like a corpse with that pale face and tight-shut eyes and the hands clenched on his chest. In fact had it not been for the snores she'd have taken him for a corpse.

All Antonina's gay light-heartedness vanished. Perplexed and alarmed she stared at the sunken eyes, the dark brow, the pale neck. No, her old love for him was not dead, it lay somewhere deep within her.

Yasha must be cold. The ground was like ice.

She stooped, tugged at his coat to make him get up and go home into the warmth. The coat did not yield; Yasha's body was pressing on it with all its weight. Antonina pulled harder.

"Don't touch that coat!" Yasha muttered hoarsely. "Keep your hands off it, or else..."

He half opened his eyes and saw the thin girlish legs in cotton stockings, the patched shoes, the hem of a dress and a hand clutching his coat. Someone was trying to get him to his feet.

"Is that you, Zoya?" he muttered, without looking up. "Lie down here beside me and we'll keep each other warm. . . ."

He stretched out a hand and made a grab for Antonina's ankle. She stepped back.

"Oh no, you won't get away from me," he sneered and crawled along the ground. "Come here, my little swallow. . . ."

If Yasha had not used that phrase, nothing, perhaps, would have happened. Antonina would have run on, and that would have been the end of it. But with those words everything swam before her eyes and she swung her foot hard at Yasha and only then hurried along the path, clutching her breast.

"You little bitch," Yasha shouted after her. "I'll teach you. Don't think you can get away from me."

Yasha's voice rose to a plaintive whimper like that of a dog that is being whipped; Antonina pressed her hands to her ears to shut out the sound. Catching sight of a figure ahead of her, she slipped down a path to the side and then darted across the grass, her dress catching on the bare branches of the shrubs. The blood roared in her ears. Or was it the throb of her heart? She thought she could hear footsteps coming up behind her; Yasha must be on her trail; surely those were his feet drumming on the frozen ground.

"Dear mother, defend me, save me from him," she prayed. "He'll kill me. Oh, don't let little Igor be left an orphan."

She tripped, fell headlong and lay still, too terrified to raise her head. High overhead a pine rocked slowly, portentously; a red-breasted bullfinch perched for a moment on a twig, fluttered its tail and flew off; all the natural beauty around her spelled a lofty calm but Antonina saw nothing of this. Then something scratched her cheek and she felt her hand grow numb with cold. Dashing a dry stalk from her face, she sat up and cried. She felt sorry for herself. Fancy running into him on such a lovely morning. He and his "little swallow"!

Brushing the grass off her skirt and jacket, Antonina wiped her tear-stained face and hurried on. She simply had to buy that material for the dress; if the blue silk with the polka dots had gone it would mean she wouldn't have a nice-looking dress for the holidays.

The shop was very full; but over the heads of the customers crowding against the counter Antonina saw the silk she wanted. There it was on the shelf, the brightest of blue and all over it the different-coloured dots dancing so merrily.

"Too bright for me," said one woman, eyeing the silk. "It creases, too. I crumpled it in my hand for a moment and it came out all creases."

What a silly woman, thought Antonina. Who wanted to crumple a silk frock in her hand?

"Please cut me three metres of that silk up there," she called over the shoulders of the other customers.

That was really good luck. There was something left over, too, to buy a present for Igor—some flannelette with a pink check pattern.

Antonina took her parcel and left the shop. The sun was pale and had little warmth in it; but it set the frost sparkling on the iron railings of the gardens and spread pools of light on the walls of the new house. That was the house where Valya and Vladimir Nazarenko lived—they had moved in as soon as it was finished.

Antonina decided to call on Valya. She'd see how they were settling down. Valya had often invited her to drop in any time she liked.

She climbed the staircase, which still had traces of plaster on it, and rang the bell. A woman she did not recognize opened the door and told her that Valya was in the kitchen. But before Antonina had time to go in there, Valya ran out to meet her in the passage.

"Hello, Tonya," she said with delight. "Why, Vladimir's on his way to see you. We're giving our house-warming party today."

Valya was in a house-coat and apron; hair-curlers poked out from under her bright kerchief. She kissed Antonina, bringing with her the warm smells of the kitchen, and led the way to her room.

"Vladimir's gone to see Andrei Borisovich," she said. "Then he's going on to Zhukov. D'you remember that young doctor at the hospital, that's Zhukov's wife, you know. Then he was going on to two boys in the band and then to you. We only decided yesterday to have a party—it was pay day, you know—well, how d'you like the room?"

She threw open the door and stopped on the threshold, inviting Antonina's admiration. The room was large and light. There was a bed with a neat, pretty counterpane on it, a table with an embroidered cloth, a wardrobe with a mirror—everything quite new and very spick and span. Even the leaves of the plants on the window-sill seemed to be specially glossy; the polished floor was spotless.

"D'you remember that competition the girls organized in the hostel?" she asked Antonina. "For the tidiest bed and the best room, remember? Well, I look after this room just as if we still had a competition."

She looked with alarm at Antonina's dusty shoes and wiped her own slippers on a mat near the door. Antonina took the hint and did likewise.

"And look, there's Ksenia's corner—little cot, table and cupboard," said Valya, as if Antonina was unable to distinguish these things for herself. "Vladimir took her out with him. Fresh air's good for her, you know."

Antonina examined the room enviously. If only she and Igor had a place like that! She'd arrange a corner for him—the best corner of the room—and she'd keep the place just as clean as Valya did; she'd have flowers too. Of course, Igor was all right: the factory crèche had everything he needed, but how could it be compared with a room like this?

Antonina did not want Valya to notice how much she envied her; but she could not resist praising the room, the curtains, the baby-cot. Then she showed Valya her purchases.

"I'm going to have a dress made for the holidays," she said. "And this will be for Igor next summer."

"Oh, it's lovely silk, Tonya," exclaimed Valya, laying the material over Antonina's shoulder.

Antonina looked into the mirror and saw herself transformed into a stranger—slight and pretty as a butterfly.

"Valya! the cake's burning, come and take it out!" cried Dusya Syurtukova, dashing into the room. "Hello, Tonya, come to help?"

Noticing the piece of silk, Dusya wound it over her shoulder and turned in front of the mirror. She asked Antonina what dressmaker she was going to give it to and when Antonina told her, argued that Anto-

nina's dressmaker would spoil it. She'd be much wiser to use a dressmaker she, Dusya, knew.

Antonina listened and nodded assent. She agreed to go with Dusya to her dressmaker, she had no objection to Dusya choosing the pattern, she agreed to the frills that Valya suggested. But she would make the suit for Igor herself—a young mother had promised to give her the pattern.

"Promised!" Dusya said scornfully. "I'll cut you a pattern for it straight away. If you knew how many suits like this I've made for my Mitya."

She snatched a newspaper from the top of the bookcase, found a pair of scissors, pulled the cloth off the table and set about cutting out a pattern.

"See, there's the sleeve. And that's the front hem. That's the back. There's the trouser-leg. This is where you put the pocket—boys like little pockets, you know. And there's the place for the straps over the shoulders. You don't need a pattern for them."

The scraps of newspaper slipped on to the clean floor; the table-cloth hung crumpled from the corner of the table. Antonina glanced over her shoulder in alarm: what if Valya were to see the mess they were making, wouldn't she be angry?

"Don't let that worry you," said Dusya. "After all, what's the point of all this scrubbing and polishing she does? Mother's pretty keen on cleanliness but we believe home's meant for man and not man for the home."

In her heart of hearts Antonina did not agree with Dusya. She liked everything about Valya's room; she dropped to her knees and picked up the scraps of paper.

"Stop it," said Dusya vexedly. "We'll sweep it up. Let's go in the kitchen first, though: we'll be needed for the cooking."

Yasha and the humiliating scene in the park—all that had slipped from Tonya's memory in the happy open-hearted company of Dusya and Valya. She tidied the table-cloth and followed Dusya into the kitchen. Four families shared it, each with a kitchen-table of its own. That day, however, Valya had the run of the place: her neighbours were delighted to help and lent her pots and pans and glasses.

As they cooked, the three young mothers talked about their children.

"Aren't you tired of working in the crèche?" Dusya asked. "Not thinking of coming back to the shop?"

"Why on earth should I?" Antonina shrugged. "I'm never going to give up working with babies. I'm taking a nurses' training course now, and later I want to learn to be a children's doctor, one who looks after the very young ones. You can't imagine how interesting that work is. A baby can't tell you what's wrong with it or where the pain is; it's up to you to find that out."

"Wouldn't catch me touching the little brats," said Dusya. "I was afraid to pick Mitya up for the first year. Mum looked after him all the time."

"You're lucky. You've got a mother. There are some who haven't."

A momentary hush fell on the kitchen: neither Antonina nor Valya could call on a mother's help; they had lost their mothers in childhood.

Dusya, sensing their sadness, set about chopping the cabbage so vigorously that bits of it flew all over the kitchen.

"Look out, Dusya," said Valya. "You'll break something if you're not careful."

The light was beginning to fade when Antonina and Dusya left the house. They would have to hurry if they were to get home, wash, do their hair and change into party frocks for the evening. Antonina wanted to ask Dusya what dress she was going to wear but felt too shy. Dusya had so many things; she and Vasya earned good money; there was no keeping up with them.

She decided to wear her black skirt with a white blouse and a blue bow at the neck. Evening shoes she would borrow from Zoya—it was her night to be on duty so she wouldn't need them. Antonina resolved to have a good time.

If only she could forget Yasha once and for all, forget the way he had stretched his hand out to grip her ankle, forget the way he'd said "little swallow." If only she could be happy, calm, confident in herself like Dusya Syurtukova. If it had been Dusya she'd have forgotten Yasha all right. She wouldn't have felt any pity for him; she'd have walked on and nothing more.

Antonina wanted to find out whether she could walk past Yasha herself now. She went through the park again. But now there was no one lying on the path. Yasha must have recovered and gone home. Home, where, probably, his wife was crying as she sponged the blood off his face, changed his clothes and helped him to bed. Not much fun having a husband like that!

It was silly of her to be frightened. What had made her run away from him as though she were crazy?

Antonina felt better; again that ditty came back into her head. She wondered if in the wide world there existed a young man who could love her. Of course there must be one. And of course she would fall in love with him. She was only nineteen, she had all her life before her and one fine day she would be walking out in this park on a fellow's arm. But where was she going to meet that fellow? And when?

Antonina reached the crèche in no time. At the gate stood a stranger who was gazing up and down the road. For some reason he seemed delighted to see Antonina and smiled as he opened the gate for her. Antonina looked at the young man with surprise but he stepped aside without a word.

Who could it be? Why had he smiled so happily? Could she have been mistaken, but, really, he. . . . Maybe. . . .

She walked on slowly, stopped, glanced aside. Then she looked right round: the man was still standing at the gate watching her. But he was no longer smiling: he looked impatient, querulous.

The spark of joy that had suddenly been kindled in her heart died; Antonina stepped firmly on to the porch, rubbed her shoes hard on the mat and went to her room in the nurses' hostel. It was quiet inside; none of the nurses who had been on day-shift were resting, and the four white beds stood unruffled and austere. Antonina dragged her suitcase from under her bed, took out the skirt and blouse, found a blue bow at the bottom of everything but put it away again. What was the use of it? Who had she to make herself pretty for?

She would have to plug in the iron and do something about that blouse, though; but when she saw what time it was, she decided to feed Igor and Marusya Ryabova first. She was feeding Marusya as well as her own baby because the little girl's mother was ill and couldn't nurse her herself. She slipped into a white gown and covered her head, then walked along a short corridor to the crèche. The babies' feeding-time was near and from the nursery came insistent yells; the nurses were changing the babies before they kept their appointments with their mothers.

"Oh, there you are, Tonya darling, I've been waiting and waiting for you," called Zoya, dashing into the corridor. "Do a switch with me tonight, there's a dear. I've a ticket for the cinema and Vitali's been waiting for me such a long time. I told him I'd leave as soon as you came back."

So that was why the fellow was waiting at the gate. Even Zoya with her lisp and that complexion of hers had her admirer; and she was so certain that Antonina would stand in for her that evening, she'd already got one arm out of the sleeve of her hospital gown.

"I'd planned to go out myself tonight," said Antonina, watching Zoya struggle with a knot. "Valya Nazarenko's giving a house-warming party. I was going to ask you to lend me your evening shoes."

Zoya went on fumbling with the tapes at her cuff but now she was relying them. She said nothing, just sighed; she realized it was useless to argue—not decent, either, for Tonya was always willing to switch with anybody who asked.

"You can have the shoes," she whispered. "They're in my locker."

Zoya sounded utterly resigned to her fate. She'd have to go and tell Vitali she couldn't get off. He'd find somebody else to go with; the ticket wouldn't be wasted. There were plenty of other girls. . . .

Zoya pictured those unknown girls—gay and rosy-checked they skipped and laughed before her, their eyes sparkling, their pearly teeth gleaming, their ear-rings jingling.

"Tonya," she implored. "Please do it for me, just this last time. I'll stand in for you a whole month afterwards."

Her eyes were full of entreaty as she looked up at Antonina over her sleeve. The tape parted and under the hospital gown Antonina saw the cuff of Zoya's best pink blouse. She looked from the cuff to the carefully curled hair peeping from under Zoya's regulation cap, to the bead necklace, to the dabs of powder on her cheeks. For an instant she saw the smile of the young man who was waiting at the gate.

"All right," she said curtly. "Go to your cinema. I'll stay in."

Antonina turned her back, deaf to Zoya's delighted lisps, and hurried into the ward. The babies greeted her arrival with a concerted howl.

"So here you are at last," growled an old nurse, wrapping one of the babies on the table. "They're quite wild today; no holding 'em. Take your choice, they're both hungry."

Antonina picked up the doll-like baby with its red face and its screaming mouth, and began to suckle it. There was only one other woman in the room but Antonina could hear mothers arriving and taking off their coats in the cloak-room next door. She sat in a corner, one foot resting on a low stool, and pressed the child to her breast. "Come on, Marusya, don't waste time. Igor's hungry too. Can't you hear him crying while I'm feeding you?"

The mothers filed in, each wearing a white gown; the walk in the cold wind had brightened their cheeks. The screaming babies were carried in, given the breast and at once fell silent. The room was warm and still; a table-lamp with a blue glass shade cast a soft light; the nurse on duty came up quietly to each mother in turn and enquired in a whisper how her baby was feeding.

Antonina carried the replete, sleepy Marusya back to the nursery and picked up Igor. He smacked his lips with relish and drawing his hands from under the wrappings smote his mother's breast.

"Come, my pet, my son," whispered Antonina as she bent over the child. "You are all I have in the world, my joy, my sorrow, my bitter memories, my consolation. . . ."

She pressed her lips against the warm downy crown of the infant's head, and she imagined Valya's room full of guests, and the festive table with the empty place which was meant for her.

It had grown quite dark outside and through the well-polished window panes she could see the evening star. She would have sat on there much longer had not the nurse poked an angry face round the door and said:

"Are you going to feed him for a whole week, or what? Come on, it's time we went and cleared up."

2

In September Varya Stoletova left Verkhnyaya Kamenka. Ivan Konstantinovich and the twins stayed behind with Stepan—the old man, as he said, "for ever," the boys until the winter holidays. Ivan Konstantinovich asked Varya to be certain to send him his winter clothes.

"And don't forget my felt boots," he said. "I'll need my fur cap and the woollen mittens and socks; the quilted blanket too. And all the warm clothes for the children you can find."

After Varya's departure life became less eventful, though no one could complain of it being dull: the little boys were packed off to school every morning, Ivan Konstantinovich coached young workers from the factory and Stoletov spent the whole day at work. All four of them would leave home together and Stoletov always saw the children as far as the school doors.

He had just parted with them at the entrance to the school one morning, watched them climb up the steps to the porch and was on his way to the factory. The morning was sunny but there was a nip in the air. On the shady side of the street the ice was too hard to break underfoot but on the sunny side it was beginning to melt as in spring. Stoletov crossed over into the sun, shortened his stride and strolled on, deep in thought; suddenly a shower of leaves descended on him; a poplar which had been caught by the frost during the night had shed the remainder of its foliage as the sun warmed it up.

Stoletov sprang aside and looked round to see whether anyone had noticed that mighty leap. He brushed the leaves off his head and shoulders. It was then that he saw the instructor from the regional Party committee get out of a car near the factory gates and walk towards him.

"Quite a jump," the instructor sang out gaily. "I thought you'd seen a bear."

"Why shouldn't I jump?" Stoletov sounded angry. "I got the whole lot on the back of my neck." The instructor's jesting tone seemed untimely, mocking. Anyway, what was he doing there so early in the morning? Probably come to follow up some more tittle-tattle.

Since Chumov's dismissal, officials from the regional committee had paid the factory several visits in connection with statements he had made—statements which were directed against Stoletov, Budanov, the secretaries of the shop Party organizations and people who had absolutely nothing to do with running the factory.

Recently, however, these investigations had ceased: Chumov's statements were no longer given credence at regional headquarters. So Chumov tried another line: he stopped signing his denunciations with his name and, knowing that they would not be read if they were anonymous, put faked signatures to them, usually of men supposed to be in the services. Some of these letters, which purported to be from old acquaintances of Communists working at the factory and which contained all kinds of "revelations" about their past, were taken seriously, replies being sent to the fictitious addresses. Later, though, when the "sergeant" or the "seaman" was discovered to be none other than Chumov such denunciations were ignored.

Yet for some reason—perhaps because of the instructor's jocular manner—Stoletov imagined that his appearance must forebode something unpleasant. He shook hands with him brusquely, brushed the rest of the leaves off his coat and looked at the instructor quizzically. What's brought you here, my friend, that look asked; you look so sweet, you must have some bitter pill to administer.

The instructor, however, was in no hurry to come to the point; he launched into a discussion about the strange natural phenomenon of the poplar shedding its foliage so suddenly.

"And, mark my word, you'll not find another tree that does the same. None, except our Urals poplar. That's a phenomenon that you only find here in the Urals."

He spoke with pride in his voice. Was such a "phenomenon" really something to be so proud of, wondered Stoletov?

Stoletov showed the instructor into his office; to his surprise, he found Budanov sitting at his desk. The factory manager was on the telephone.

"Oh, here he is," Budanov said into the receiver. "Good-bye."

He got up and told Stoletov that he had been trying to get in touch with him for the past half-hour. There had been a call from the Ministry saying that Stoletov and Kovalev were to go to Moscow for a conference.

"I've sent someone to the airport for your tickets. Kovalev knows. I couldn't get hold of you anywhere. I wonder what it's all about."

"It's in connection with Korolev's article," said the instructor. "And you needn't bother about the tickets. I've got them in my pocket. We heard they were being sent for late last night but I didn't want to disturb you by ringing up so late, and decided to come over in the morning. There's an afternoon plane so there's plenty of time. Ring up the airport, though, and cancel your message."

He took the tickets out of his pocket and handed them to Stoletov.

"Haven't they asked for Korolev?" asked Stoletov. "That's a shame. He was a member of the commission, he knows the whole affair and, after

all, it was his article that set the ball rolling. One way or another we must get him to Moscow," he turned to Budanov. "Send him up on factory business and we'll get him into the conference all right."

How strange and unexpected it all was! The day had begun like any other with its routine jobs; none of them had any special plans to travel; and yet here they were, the three of them, waiting for the plane and talking about Moscow. They didn't even know what the trip held in store for them: approval of the "shrew" or the decision that it was unsatisfactory.

While waiting, Stoletov suggested a visit to the restaurant. They decided to have a late lunch. But the food was tasteless, the *hors-d'œuvres* uninviting, the beer flat. Why on earth the people who ran the restaurant in this fine, attractive airport building should pay so little attention to the requirements of travellers waiting for a plane, or making a brief stop between long spells of flying—that was something Stoletov could not understand.

Neither Andrei nor Kovalev worried about the restaurant's shortcomings, however. Kovalev, engrossed in his own thoughts, drank the beer and ate the uninviting food without noticing what he was offered; Andrei was excited at the prospect of seeing his father again, of being back in Moscow and of meeting his friends at the newspaper office which he was determined to visit. Yes, thought Stoletov as he watched Andrei, there was no doubt that he was glad to be going to Moscow: he'd been looking out-of-sorts recently. . . .

"You're looking a bit peaky," Stoletov said to him. "Lost weight. Lines under your eyes. That's not the way you ought to let your father see you. Not in form."

In form! Would anybody be in form after what he'd been through. Stoletov must know all about it. And of course he'd taken him along with them to Moscow to distract him and console him, and not at all because he considered that the author of the article about the Kovalev invention should be there.

Andrei stole a glance at Stoletov. Surely he wasn't going to offer him his sympathy? But Stoletov was looking elsewhere now: he was settling the bill and reproaching the waitress for the tasteless meal she had brought them.

"I'm sure you'd be ashamed to offer visitors a meal like that in your own house," he said. "Yet here you do it. That's inhospitable, you know; and it doesn't reflect well on you, either."

"We serve what's given to us at the counter," the waitress replied as she counted out the change. "At home I can choose because I do my own cooking but here we're just serving the stuff."

"You ought to refuse to take it if it's not tasty. You ought to protest and kick up a row. Here I come for a meal; what do I know about the cook or the girl behind the counter who hands you the food? I have to deal with you. And I'm sure you don't like it when a customer leaves as hungry as when he came in. In your place I'd feel downright ashamed of myself."

The girl listened in silence, then went away with the untouched food.

"What's the use?" said Kovalev. "Her being ashamed won't help you much, would it?"

"What's the use, you ask? See what's happening?" Stoletov said triumphantly. "She's bringing the manager."

The waitress returned to the table with a lanky character in a dark suit and a dingy shirt. He looked worn out and limp as he ambled towards them, holding the palm of his hand to his cheek.

"These are the customers who complained," said the waitress, stopping at their table and indicating Stoletov. "They hardly touched the food. Sent it all back."

The manager's face contorted with pain; what could he do if the suppliers treated him so badly?

"You could have a tinned crab salad instead of the fish," he suggested. "And an omelette, perhaps?"

"We don't want your salad," said Stoletov. "We'll bear up till Moscow and have supper there. The suppliers indeed! It's not their fault. What's wrong is your indifference to passengers' needs."

The manager winced still harder and pressed his hand to his cheek. He obviously had tooth-ache. What did this disgruntled passenger want of him? The plane would soon be in and then he'd be off. And he'd probably never come into the place again for a meal. People rarely came twice; they arrived, they left with their complaints and their demands. Suppose he were to go and see his suppliers tomorrow to try and get some better stuff out of them. Well, this passenger would have left long before and all his efforts would be unappreciated.

Some mechanics came out of the office, a young woman in uniform hurried through the restaurant, and over the loud-speaker came a woman's voice inviting the passengers to go out on to the tarmac.

"Come along," said Stoletov and rose to his feet.

As they took off, Stoletov stole a glance at Andrei. A pity a decent chap like that should be feeling so cut up about the way Lyuba Zvonaryeva had treated him. You can't yank out pain and resentment like a rotten tooth! Only time can help.

But time hadn't helped much in the case of Kovalev, had it? There he sat, eyes shut, head down, taciturn and closed up. It needed more than a change of scene to drive away his sorrow.

What was worse, Stoletov wondered: to lose completely someone dear to you as Yelena Protasova had lost her husband or to know that that person is alive and well, happy even, but become a stranger to you, a stranger for ever? The loss that Protasova had suffered was irreparable. . . . No one had taken the place of her husband in her life, no one ever would, but she had not allowed herself to brood over her grief and had never hidden it from others. And as a result she found life easier than Kovalev who was incapable of telling anybody what had happened to him. He could not talk about the past, about the time when he and the woman he loved were together, because that past was spoiled, blighted. He did not believe in the past, he cursed himself for his trustfulness, he did not know exactly when that trustfulness had become ridiculous, his love unheeded, his presence burdensome.

"Going to sleep, Arseni Mikhailovich?"

"No," Kovalev replied. "I can't sleep sitting up."

"That's one of the things I learned to do during the war, to sleep sitting or even standing. There were times when I seemed to fall off to sleep on the march; I'd go on and on and then suddenly come to with a

jerk, I'd begin to sway and stumble and lose all idea where I was. I don't suppose that would happen to me now."

"I wasn't in the army," said Kovalev. "I was stuck back in the rear, working in a factory. There'd be times when I had to sleep in the shop but I'd always have to lie down on a bench in my office. Hello, we seem to be losing height. Where've we got to?"

"Kazan, I expect," said Andrei, looking out and seeing scattered lights ahead....

Andrei walked up and down the tarmac as crates were unloaded. He felt impatient to be in the air again. He wanted to be in Moscow before midnight, to run up the familiar staircase to the third floor, to press the yellow bell and listen with his ear against the door to the approaching footsteps. Whose would they be? If they were short and light it would be Maria Mikhailovna. Dragging and slow—that would be the old lady who lived down the corridor. But if the steps were firm and unhurried they would be his father's. Andrei hoped his father would open the door to him, that he would have a presentiment that it was his son ringing, that he would be the first to see Andrei back.

Moscow at last! A comfortable room in a hotel; the chambermaid silently moving to and fro; quietness in the passage; the well-known street scene through the window. Stoletov was using the telephone; Kovalev was washing in the white-tiled bathroom, and Andrei sat on the edge of a soft chair upholstered in pink satin, waiting until he could conveniently leave for home.

They had driven straight from the airport to the hotel which was to be their headquarters. Andrei, however, did not feel like resting after the flight; he wanted to get home, to the street where he knew every stone, where one of those stones had the name A. Korolev scratched on it with a nail, and where that high wooden fence stood behind which stretched the wide yard of an old three-storey house, with wooden sheds in it, a volley-ball court and a bench under a tree.

What a long time Stoletov was on that phone.

"The conference is at eleven tomorrow morning," he announced at last as he replaced the receiver. "You're free till ten o'clock."

At last Andrei was in that street, close to that house. The gate opened with its usual creak, the yard smelled just the same.

There was a light on in the room with the white casement curtains. That was their room. The one next to it with the net curtains drawn was where Nikolai's mother lived. But how small and old everything looked. The yard which used to seem so spacious looked quite cramped, with its shabby low-roofed outhouses jostling each other. And the tree was not at all high; the staircase was narrow, the steps worn down, the yellow bell-push lay deep in the rustling brass frame nailed on a door that had become quite black with age.

"Open the door. It's me, Andrei!"

"Andryusha!" A small grey-haired woman threw her arms round his neck. "Where have you come from? My dear boy."

A door banged; firm, well-known footsteps sounded at the end of the passage; Andrei held his breath.

"Dad!"

Everything else slipped out of sight; he saw only the tall, grey-headed, infinitely dear man who was walking towards him....

That night flew by. Lights burned till dawn in every room of that third-floor flat, in the kitchen, in the passage. Andrei and his father sat at the table; Maria Mikhailovna kept popping in and out. Even the old lady who lived down the passage did not go to bed but kept fussing in the kitchen, more hindrance than help to Maria Mikhailovna. Kettles and saucepans steamed on the gas stove, a *pirog* baked in the oven, and on



the sofa, fresh clean sheets waited impatiently for Andrei. The son of the house had returned. A beloved guest, unexpected but oh, so welcome!

"So that article of yours had some effect?" Andrei's father asked him with a gratified smile. "On the government, too! That's no laughing matter. You must bring that inventor round to see us. I'll show him over the factory."

Andrei did not risk disappointing his father by telling him that Kovalev would not find anything to admire in the old small factory where his father worked.

"If we're kept for a few days in Moscow I'll bring him round for sure," he replied. "Even if he hasn't time to see the factory he'll be able to meet you."

"Tell me, Andrei, is Nik getting on all right with Nina?" asked Maria Mikhailovna. "She strikes me as being a bit bossy and Nikolai's so quiet, you know."

"Quiet! Oh, you don't know him. He gave our prize rowdy such a clout that I don't suppose he's forgotten it yet.... Yes, they're getting on all right. The only trouble is they haven't a room."

"That's because of you," said Andrei's father. "Nikolai wants all three of you to live together. That's why they're waiting till there's a flat available. I don't understand; can't you really live on your own?"

"Me? What's it got to do with me?"

Andrei looked from his father to Maria Mikhailovna. He didn't understand. Maria Mikhailovna was frowning. So his old man must have given away some secret. But Andrei heard his father continue as he stroked his moustache: "Well, even if it's not because of you, let them have your room. You'll find somewhere to live; it's never hard for one. Those two are fretting something terrible."

A late-autumn dawn was breaking over Moscow when the lights in that third-floor flat began to go out. The first was in the old lady's room, then the kitchen light went out, then the one in Maria Mikhailovna's room. The Korolevs' was the last. Andrei slept on the sofa where he had slept as child, schoolboy, student. His father lay still in bed thinking the thoughts of a father. So his son's wings had not been clipped. Indeed they seemed to have grown, their sweep seemed to have become broader, more powerful. But after all, that was what you would expect.

The dawn crept into the room through the white curtains. The alarm-clock had been set for nine o'clock. Andrei's father did not need it himself; he would wake without it—wake and get up and go to the factory where he would tell his mates about the unexpected visitor—flown he had, too, with important work to do. A pity, of course, that he hadn't come for long, but he couldn't complain—work is work.

3

During one of the conferences at the Ministry, Andrei saw Zhukov. They were all sitting round the table. Zhukov came in late, tossed his brief-case down casually and, choosing a place slightly apart from the others, sat lolling in his chair. He still had that self-confident, rather arrogant bearing, was as well dressed as ever, but Andrei noticed that his cheeks were hollow, that he seemed to have aged, and that the casualness did not ring true.

Catching Andrei's eye, Zhukov smiled and waved a hand. Then he took a newspaper out of his pocket, ran his eyes over the front page and began to follow the proceedings of the conference. Things were being said that to Nikolai Mikhailovich Zhukov made far from pleasant listening but he raised no objections, just sat there, silent and seemingly indifferent.

After the conference he waved once more to Andrei and edged his way towards him through the people leaving their places at the table. But Andrei played the coward: taking advantage of the fact that he was standing near the door, and pretending that he had not noticed Zhukov coming towards him, he slipped out of the room.

However, the two did meet: that evening Zhukov called on Andrei at home. It was late when he came; Andrei and his father had had supper and were thinking of going to bed. Zhukov said he would not stay for more than a few minutes but sat down and showed no signs of being in a hurry to leave.

From close to, Andrei could see more clearly than before the change in Zhukov's appearance. It was not only that the man had lost weight and that his face was distinctly more lined, but that in every gesture, smile and expression there was a guilty, ingratiating note where before there had been the self-confidence of a man used to giving orders.

Zhukov made an effort to behave in his old way: he gave Andrei a patronizing pat on the shoulder; he played his old trick of kissing Maria Mikhailovna's hand with mock politeness; and when he shook hands with Andrei's father he gave his arm a great swing and brought the palm of his hand smack against the other's. But Andrei felt that none of these familiar gestures corresponded to Zhukov's real mood. There was something forced, too, in the questions he asked about how they all were, what news they had, how Nikolai was getting on at work. . . .

The only time his voice expressed genuine interest was when he asked Andrei whether he and Nikolai were as great friends as ever. The question was an ambiguous one: it could have meant whether their friendship has survived Nikolai's marriage or whether Andrei's article had driven a wedge between them. Andrei felt it was the latter Zhukov had in mind.

Zhukov went on enquiring about his son, about Nina; but Andrei knew he was interested in something quite different. The conversation flagged; Andrei's replies became terse and grudging and Zhukov was clearly at a loss to know how to go on.

"So we can take it that our newly-weds are happy together," he said for the third time. "Ah well, they're enjoying their honeymoon. An idyllic time."

Maria Mikhailovna, who had been watching her ex-husband all the time with a severe, slightly contemptuous expression, sighed heavily and looked away. Although she did not speak, Andrei realized that she found the entire conversation unpleasant and was impatiently waiting for it to end.

"You've to be up early tomorrow, Maria Mikhailovna," said Andrei. "Why don't you go to bed and leave the clearing up to me?"

He nodded towards the table where the tea stood untouched in the glasses; and Maria Mikhailovna took the hint gladly and rose to her feet.

"I'll go to bed, if you'll excuse me," she said drily. "Good night."

It was clear to Andrei that Zhukov was in very low spirits. He had not been demoted or reprimanded in any way; but those whose opinions he valued and on whom his position depended were now speaking about him with indignation and contempt as of one who has been detected in an unworthy, base act.

And that, Andrei felt, must be worse than any administrative reprimand. Had Zhukov been discharged he would have considered himself victimized, would no doubt have found people to be sorry for him, people who would consider that he had been treated too harshly, unfairly, even. But whom could he fight against now? And how could he do it?

Andrei understood Zhukov's situation and, although he was delighted that the Kovalev machine had at last been valued at its true worth and accepted, nevertheless he felt a little sorry for Zhukov. But how he wished the man would go. He had no desire to talk about that article; he shunned explanations, knowing that they could add nothing new.

But Zhukov, apparently, wanted an explanation. He would not leave, he sat on sipping his cold tea and glancing meaningfully at Andrei's father in the hope that he, too, would go off to bed and leave Andrei and him to have a talk on their own. Then he realized that there was nowhere for Boris Ivanovich to go; there was just this one room in which they were all sitting.

"D'you mind seeing me on my way a little?" said Zhukov, pushing his glass aside. "A stroll before turning in's always good for you."

Out in the street an autumn wind was blowing and from the dark overcast sky came a spatter of rain and sleet. Andrei turned at once in the direction of the trolley-bus stop but Zhukov grasped his arm and said he preferred to walk to the taxi stand.

"I have to change if I take the trolley-bus," he said. "A taxi suits my old bones better."

He leaned more heavily on Andrei's arm as if to convey a hint that he needed the young man's help and support; then he launched on the very subject that Andrei wanted to avoid.

"That was a serious bit of work, that article of yours," Zhukov began with a wry smile. "You got your technical facts right. One might think you'd studied at a technical college instead of the philology faculty. Well done, you've learned how to handle special questions. Did you consult Stoletov or Kovalev himself?"

"I wrote the article on my own," said Andrei. He was surprised to find how much asperity had come into his voice. "There were no particularly complicated technical questions involved. . . . I used the material of the countless commissions that tested the machine."

He felt like adding that some of the material he had made use of originated from Zhukov himself. It was Zhukov, however, who raised this point.

"Oh, there's plenty of material, I admit. You must have noticed that I was one of the first to point out the merits of the Kovalev machine. I signed the document that recommended its adoption. It wasn't in any way my fault that no decision was taken then to produce the machine."

Andrei did not reply; he suppressed a desire to remind Zhukov that his signature stood under a decision of a totally opposite nature.

"Now the decision's been taken," he said, hoping thus to close a conversation he found so distasteful. "The story of the Kovalev invention has ended happily."

"Ended? D'you think so?" said Zhukov wryly. "For Kovalev maybe, but for very many others that story will have a sequel."

Breathing heavily, he leaned still more on Andrei and his voice became smooth and confidential: "Now look here, you wrote an article, a fine passionate article defending a useful invention. Your article appeared at a propitious moment, it fitted in with the ideas of those who are in charge of the Ministry just now; it was brought to their notice; they approved of it. But don't imagine that if all that material had been published earlier, Kovalev would not have had to go through all those worries and trials. Don't be so simple-minded as to think that, my friend. I wouldn't like you to get such ideas in that clever young head of yours."

Zhukov began to walk more slowly; they were approaching the taxi rank where a long line of cabs were waiting. But Andrei's attempt to head his companion towards a taxi was vain; Zhukov's suede-gloved hand tightened on Andrei's elbow and led him on.

In a sad and unfamiliar voice Zhukov explained what the situation had been at head office—with people afraid of taking the initiative, always playing safe; he told Andrei how sceptical his chiefs and their supporters among certain leading officials in the Ministry were towards any work

that originated outside and not in the designing office of the main organization.

"On the one hand we had suggestions from professors, well-known established scientists, and on the other those of engineers, technologists, and simple workers living far from Moscow, quite cut off from the institutions where problems of the latest technique were being worked on. Whose suggestion would you have given first consideration to? Which would you have preferred?"

"I'd have looked at all of them," said Andrei. "And I'd have preferred the best."

"The best! D'you think it's so easy to tell which is the best? Your attitude, if you'll excuse my saying so, is somewhat crude, Andrei. It's a very difficult business deciding which is the best. For that, you need time and practical tests—and that means spending a great deal of state money. The man who's responsible for allocating that money prefers not to risk tens of thousands of roubles but to take a design which has been done by somebody with a name, somebody who's an authority in science. . . . I know it's very easy to criticize, but it's hard to work any other way. That happens wherever you look, Andrei; you'd act the same way yourself. Say, for instance, that as editor you received two poems: one by a famous poet and the other by a workman—you'd print the one by the famous poet. And you'd be proud to have his name in your paper."

"I'd publish what I thought to be the better of the two," said Andrei. "It's not the name I'd be proud to print, but the poem."

"Well, perhaps that's what you would do," Zhukov assented hurriedly. "But, my dear fellow, judging from the poems I read in the papers and magazines I feel pretty certain that other editors are not always as conscientious as you. I always read those poems—I like poetry—and I can tell that quite often the name of the author is the only thing that got it into print. I'm not blaming the editors, mind you. They're human, after all."

"What you're saying, then, is that the only merit of the design you pushed instead of Kovalev's was the names of its designers? Am I right?"

The question was a blunt one: had Zhukov forgotten that his own name was in the list of authors of the design? Why had he started this whole conversation when it was now quite clear that the attempts to kill Kovalev's machine were prompted by base interests? The plan to produce it had been shelved, because certain people wanted to push their own work. And the names appended to the design of the Kurzhen were not so well known, either. . . .

The victor's indulgence towards the vanquished left Andrei at once: the vanquished, it appeared, did not understand the vileness of his behaviour.

"Wasn't your name among those of the designers of the Kurzhen?" said Andrei, freeing his arm from Zhukov's grasp. "I know it was. Then why did you take on the miserable job of shelving the Kovalev design? It doesn't seem to me quite correct that you should have been a member of the jury in a competition your own work was entered for."

"Are you suggesting that I shelved the Kovalev design to get some personal advantage out of it?" said Zhukov quickly. "Oh no, my friend, that won't work. I got only a mere flea-bite out of the Kurzhen."

Zhukov's voice had lost its smooth confidential tone and the smile had gone from his lips.

"As a result of that little piece of yours in the paper, I, an experienced engineer, a respected worker without a blot on my character, have been accused of pulling strings for my own advantage. Young fellows like you have been trying to make that out. I showed how baseless those charges were—with documentary proof, not just empty declarations. I was not going to let anyone smear my reputation. And I'm not going to let anyone do it now, I'll see that whoever tries to do so answers for it."

"I don't know who's been accusing you or what they've been accusing you of," said Andrei, controlling himself with difficulty. "I only charged you with one thing, and I stick to it: with not wanting to help a man who'd invented something the country needed. As for your motives—that's another question."

"But it's a question you've got an answer to in your mind," said Zhukov, alarm and concern fleeting across his face. "And not only you. You and Kovalev and that mighty champion of his, Stoletov, are up in Moscow together and you'll certainly answer that question before many commissions."

"I don't know whether we shall or not. I expect the members of those commissions know the answer already."

Andrei swung away from Zhukov and waved at a taxi that was passing by. The driver braked, drew the car up a few metres farther on, opened the door and leaned out of his seat looking out.

"Take this taxi," said Andrei, striding to the cab. "It's time I was getting back. Good night, Nikolai Mikhailovich."

Turning abruptly, Andrei walked off, not even waiting to see whether Zhukov took the taxi or not. He was in a hurry to get away from a man who had come to explain things not at all because he felt in the wrong but because he was afraid of something and wanted to forestall the danger. Andrei wanted to get back home as soon as possible. It was shameful that he had wasted a whole evening that he might have spent with his father. Now it was late; the yard was quite dark; his father would have gone to bed.

Andrei hurried. There was still a light burning in their room. A shadow moved on the curtain and disappeared.

"Here you are at last," he heard his father say as he ran up the stairs. "Out strolling with him for so long, you'd think he was a young lady. It doesn't leave us any time for a good talk."

Andrei's father stood on the landing, frowning at his tall, grown-up son. Just look at the size of him. But he came up the stairs like he'd done as a schoolboy—three steps at a time without holding on to the bannisters, and sliding on the smooth flags of the landing as if they were ice.

"Did you see him home?" asked Boris Ivanovich, closing the door behind Andrei.

"No, I shoved him into a taxi. But before that I had to listen to all sorts of explanations."

Boris Ivanovich gave an understanding nod: it wasn't for nothing that an important old bird like Zhukov came to his house. That article of Andrei's had touched him in a sore place. One didn't have to look twice at him to see that.

"Well, did he calm down after your explanations? Or did he still have the fidgets like he did here?"

"He was a bit fidgety at first, then he started moaning for sympathy but in the end he lost his temper. Oh, let's forget him. I'm sorry for Nikolai, though—it's rotten luck to have a father like that."

4

There was nothing to keep them in Moscow any longer. Stoletov, returning that evening to his hotel, looked through his notebooks and marvelled at the amount of work they had got through. True, the questions had been settled without fuss, there had been few obstacles to surmount; some firm, just hand had removed those obstacles without their aid. All the same, they had sat in at many conferences, taken the advice of various experts, consulted the scientific research institute which had previously rejected the "shrew" flatly but which now not only recognized its merits but found that with a slight modification of the design it could be used for yet another function or two.

Besides matters directly connected with the machine and interesting to Stoletov as an engineer there were matters of a quite different nature—an impartial analysis had to be made of the reasons why Kovalev had been given so much trouble. The results of this analysis fully confirmed the opinions expressed in Andrei's article.

As he packed, Stoletov glanced once more at his notebook to make sure that everything had been done, closed his suitcase, and impressed on Andrei the importance of being at the station the following morning in good time for the train—not two or three minutes before it was due out: he didn't want any unnecessary worry.

"I'm a provincial," he said. "I'm not used to little tricks like turning up after the whistle's gone. I like to arrive in good time to visit the refreshment room, say good-bye to the people who've come to see me off, and settle down in my compartment."

Andrei promised not to be late and left; he planned to see a play that evening. Stoletov and Kovalev remained in the hotel room. They were in no hurry; they had a good supper in the restaurant, sat listening to the orchestra for a while and then went for a stroll. It was still fairly early—just before the theatres opened—and the people in the streets were hurrying along as if each of them was on his way to a play or a concert.

"A pity we didn't get tickets for something," complained Stoletov. "I felt quite envious of Andrei when he said he was going to the Art Theatre."

"I'd like to take you to a certain flat," Kovalev said abruptly. "It's only a few minutes' walk from here. I don't think we'll stay there long. Please come and do me the favour not to ask why I'm taking you there."

Kovalev's voice held a strange note. He sounded moved, uneasy; Stoletov went with him and asked no questions. Silently the two men climbed a staircase and entered a flat where they were met by a woman whom Stoletov did not know though her face seemed vaguely familiar.

On opening the door, the woman uttered a startled cry and dashed out of sight. "Go into the dining-room," she called from another room. "I'll join you in a moment."

Kovalev shrugged, smiled wryly and led the way down a narrow passage, choked with suitcases, bookshelves, packing cases. It was clear that all these things had once been in the rooms and had been pushed out because no one was using them now.

The small dining-room was brightly lit by an unshaded lamp that hung bleakly from the ceiling. The table below it was a fine piece of antique furniture like all the rest in the room—the bucket-backed chairs, the uncomfortably hard sofa, the sideboard with the painted china on glass-fronted shelves. There were pictures on the wall—all portraits of the same woman.

"Her first husband was an artist," said Kovalev, noticing Stoletov's interest in the pictures. "Then I came. Now there's a doctor. There may have been others. I don't know."

Stoletov detected scorn and with it self-pity in Kovalev's voice. So that was where Kovalev had brought him. But why did he have to do it?

"D'you think they are a good likeness?" the woman asked. "Probably not. I've grown old, haven't I?"

There was archness in the question—it obviously invited a denial. But Stoletov replied: "Yes, you've changed a great deal."

Although at first sight the woman looked almost boyishly young with her short hair, exaggeratedly short skirt, jumper and low-heeled shoes, the bright lamp betrayed her lightly rouged cheeks, and an excessive application of mascara and lipstick. Glancing at the lamp, she went up to the table and pulled down a piece of newspaper which was tied round the flex. The room became darker and in this light that face became quite young.

"I'm Marina," she said, as she shook hands with Stoletov. "So you think I've aged a lot, do you?"

Not waiting for an answer she went to Kovalev, flung her arms round his neck and kissed him on the lips.

"Are you going to be in Moscow for long?" she asked him.

Kovalev said he was leaving Moscow very shortly. Then Marina began prattling about all sorts of nonsense, saying she had no lampshade because she simply couldn't get anything decent to match the new furniture, that her husband was in Leningrad on business and that her daughter had gone to the theatre with a friend.

As she talked, she wandered about the room putting plates and glasses on the table and pouring out some wine.

"Let's drink to the past," she said, holding her glass out to Kovalev. Then turning to Stoletov, "And with you I'll drink to the future."

Stoletov clinked glasses with her, sipped the dry wine and put his glass down, thinking that he would not care to share any part of his future with this woman. Everything about her was so unnatural, so unpleasant. He remembered the way she had looked when she opened the door to them. Then her face and her hair looked quite different and she wore a rather grubby house-dress instead of that jumper and skirt. She had changed her clothes, brushed her hair and made up her face just for the visitors; obviously when she was alone she was quite different. He watched her attentively, trying to fathom the reason for Kovalev's infatuation. Of course, she was attractive now that the light was dimmer. But remove that make-up and not much of the beauty would remain. Was she intelli-

gent? Probably not very; she would sit there smoking and talking about parties and the stage celebrities she knew. Was she perhaps warm-hearted, sensitive? Then why had she kissed her ex-husband, knowing that he was still in love with her and that she was making him suffer?

Stoletov felt angry and ill-disposed towards Marina. She was not at all to his taste. It was painful to see a fine intelligent man like Kovalev lose his wits whenever she looked at him, trembled at her touch, swallow glass after glass as he watched her lips.

And Marina knew what power she had over him. She knew it and for some reason of her own exercised it, moving quite close to Kovalev, brushing him with her shoulder, taking his glass and touching its edge with her lips. Why did she do that? The devil only knew. In any case it was horrible to see.

Stoletov decided to get up and go but did not want to leave Kovalev alone with the woman. Couldn't he see what trash she was? Everything about her was so false. She was lying now, pretending that Kovalev's presence moved her feelings, letting her hand, her glance rest on him. As if it meant anything at all to her.

"Why aren't you drinking?" Marina asked Stoletov.

"I don't like dry wine."

"Shall I send for some brandy?"

"No, don't bother. I don't feel like drinking at all."

"Don't be such a wet blanket. I'll cheer you up."

She went into the next room and returned with a guitar. She sat on the sofa, brushed the strings with her fingers and broke into a sentimental song. Where did that made-up hag get that bitter voice, so full of real anguish? Where had she learned that strange rambling melody so like an old Gypsy song? Had it a melody at all? Was it Marina singing or some lonely, embittered creature relating her unhappiness?

Stoletov did not see the painted lips, the over-short skirt, the pert looks. He only heard that voice, so full of longing and plaintive entreaty.

He stole a glance at Kovalev and it seemed to him that there were tears in Kovalev's eyes as he sat there, his head grasped between his hands. What memories did that song revive? Why had Marina chosen to sing it? She sang well, that had to be admitted, though she had no voice. The trick was done by some special intonation. She had forgotten entirely about her appearance—she sat in an ungainly pose crouched over the guitar, and failed to notice that now the light fell directly on her, showing her wrinkles and the make-up on her cheeks.

"What a sad song. Can't you sing something a bit jollier?" said Stoletov smiling coldly.

"I don't know any of that kind. I'll sing you an old, old Gypsy romance."

Please yourself, thought Stoletov. Anyway, he couldn't take Marina seriously. He felt sure that if need be she could sing music-hall songs and dance on the table despite those thick ankles which she flaunted so much. She wasn't at all the languid lily she tried to make herself out to be. When she was on her own, he was sure, she fussed about with silly little gestures. No, Marina would not catch him with her guitar and her songs. But poor old Kovalev had swallowed it all, hook, line and sinker.

"Don't you think it's time we got going, Arseni Mikhailovich?"

Ah, she didn't like that. She realized that he'd read her thoughts. All right, let her be mad if she wanted to be. He'd gladly have told her what he thought of her had he not felt sorry for a good fellow.

What a relief to be out in the street. A marvellous cool drizzle, a splendidly bracing wind, the pedestrians hurrying along the shiny wet pavements.

"That was a complete waste of time, Arseni Mikhailovich."

"Perhaps you're right. But I wanted you to know."

"If I were in your shoes I'd get your daughter out of her hands."

"She won't give her up. She needs the girl as a sort of shield. Anyway it's too late, the girl's fourteen, she's spoiled—like her mother. Let's not talk about it any more, Stepan Demyanovich."

"Very well, old man. . . ."

And so the subject was not referred to again, either in Moscow or on the return journey. . . .

5

The journey back took a long time—they travelled by rail. The fourth place in their sleeper was occupied by a young engineer whom the Ministry had sent to help with the construction of the "shrew." They were returning victorious and, consequently, their spirits were high. They played cards and sang a good deal.

Even Andrei cheered up a little, much to Stoletov's satisfaction. Andrei's article had been praised and he had been invited to write more. He had bought technical dictionaries and reference books for the *Tribuna* office and presents for his friends.

The "old lady who lived down the passage" had helped him with his shopping.

"You want presents for girls? Working-girls? All right, I'll come along with you, otherwise you might buy the wrong things."

She put on her best black serge coat and a dark knitted shawl and carried a bag with a brass clasp. Andrei took the old lady's arm and they set out for the Petrovka, the street where, she asserted, everything in the world that a girl might want could be found.

The most important present was the one for Polina. Andrei decided to buy her a pair of "costume jewellery" ear-rings—bronze clips in the shape of roses which shone like real gold—with a ring, brooch and bracelet to match.

"It's a pity they don't provide a case for them," said the old lady. "We'll have to look round and see what we can find at home—I've one lined in quilted silk."

The words were not wasted. The shop-assistant blushed and put the jewellery into a case.

"It hasn't silk lining but at least it's new, it'll look better than some old case."

"A good thing it is new," said the old lady tartly, "if I hadn't mentioned the old one, you'd have given us the jewellery in a paper bag."

For Polina's two assistants the old lady chose small bead bags. She found a pretty sewing basket for Valya Nazarenko and suggested Andrei

buy Vanya a tie. When she heard the printer was elderly and smoked, she proposed a cigarette-holder.

"Is that all?" she asked disappointedly as Andrei picked up the parcels. "Haven't you got a sweetheart? Look at that lovely silk shawl with the fringe. It's just the thing for a girl to throw over her shoulders when she goes for a stroll with her young man."

"I've nobody to give it to, I'm afraid."

"You don't say! A fine young man like you and you tell me you haven't found a girl that pleases you yet. If you like I'll tell your fortune with the cards when we get home. I'm good at telling fortunes. The other day I laid out the cards to find out what was going to happen you and they foretold a long journey. I said to your father: 'Boris Iva, ovich, you may expect to see your son; he's going to come here!' And your father just laughed and said: 'True, the lad's got a long journey ahead of him, he'll live long and go far, so the cards aren't far wrong.' Your father's always making fun of me, you know, but I'll tell your fortune properly with the Queen of Diamonds."

"Why the Queen of Diamonds?"

"Because she stands for a young lady. You don't want a widow, do you? That would mean Spades."

Andrei closed his suitcase. He had been showing Stoletov his purchases and Stoletov had approved. But what pleased him most were the presents Maria Mikhailovna was sending to Nina and Nikolai—a bright blue knitted cap with scarf and mittens to match for Nina and a soft warm sweater with a reindeer and a fir tree on the chest for Nikolai.

"Hm, that's just the sort I ought to have bought for my youngsters," said Stoletov. "The ones I got are terribly ordinary—plain grey."

Stoletov had bought for his wife a pretty blue cup with a floral pattern in gold. He did not show it to the others: the cup was packed at the bottom of his suitcase wrapped up carefully in a shirt. He meant to keep it safe till the winter holidays when Varya would return to Verkhnyaya Kamenka.

Then it occurred to him that he might deliver his present to Varya during the journey. The train stopped for forty minutes at the station, the house was not far away, he could take a taxi. He had the key to the flat in his pocket—all he had to do was to drive to the house, leave his present and dash back to the train.

His home town was only half-an-hour away. Should he risk it or not? Stoletov couldn't make up his mind.

In any case, he put on his hat and coat. He took the cup out of the suitcase as surreptitiously as possible. It went into his pocket easily enough though he had qualms about the handle being safe.

"I'm going into the corridor," he told Andrei. "Get a little fresh air there."

Andrei offered to accompany him but that wouldn't do at all. Stoletov mumbled something vague in reply and hurried to the end of the coach. There he slid open the connecting door and slipped on to the gangway that led to the next coach. He did not want his companions to see him. Can't a fellow have a bit of solitude if he feels like it?

Stoletov opened the door slightly: the train seemed to be slowing down. But it was still running pretty fast, whistling occasionally as if

announcing its arrival. Stoletov knew every inch of the line—each level-crossing, incline, rail-side building. . . .

They were there! Stoletov dashed through the subway, out on to the station square and made for the taxi rank.

"I want you to drive me to Mikhailovskaya Street and wait there for me and then drive me straight back here. Make it snappy, please."

The driver swung the taxi round skilfully, shot under the nose of a tram, took the hill fast and drew up at the entrance of the house. Stoletov sprinted upstairs, slipped the key into the lock, turned it and was home.

For an instant Stoletov stopped in the hall, recovering his breath and trying to discover whether anybody was in. The flat was silent. The only sound was the loud, portentous ticking of the clock on the wall. Stoletov wondered whether Varya wound it up herself. She had always made out she didn't know how to.

First, he looked into "their" room. Nothing had changed there: over his writing-desk hung an enlarged photograph of the first post-war excavator built at the factory and on the desk itself his books and folders and a collection of pencils in a silver mug—a birthday present from his grandfather. On the piano lay sheets of music and Varya's scarf and gloves. On a small table that Varya used were music notebooks containing what were probably the exercises of Varya's pupils, an old ink-pot with a brass top and some photographs in wooden frames. The photographs were an addition. Stoletov did not remember seeing any on the desk before.

He glanced at them. One was of himself, a war-time snapshot. He had forgotten about it; Varya must have dug it out of an old album. It showed him wearing a sheepskin and a cap with ear-flaps; his head was thrown back as he stood looking up at the sky with a broad smile on his face. He looked pretty silly in that picture. Why had Varya chosen just that one for her desk?

The other photograph was also of him but this time he was with the children. That, too, was a snapshot: Varya had taken it on the lake-side. The boys were in bathing shorts and held fishing-rods in their hands. They were obviously posing for the camera, looking straight at it and pretending they'd hooked something. Stoletov, in a short-sleeved singlet, was standing in profile and laughing. . . . What a lovely hot sunny day that had been! Varya had taken many pictures that day but, once again, this was far from the best.

On a small table near the divan which served Varya as a bed, Stoletov discovered yet more photographs—again of himself and of the children, and a small one of Ivan Konstantinovich. Lying beside them was a book, some sewing, a half-full cup of tea. So Varya, usually so punctual, must have overslept that morning and been in too much of a hurry to clear away the cup she always put beside her bed in case she woke up thirsty during the night.

Taking from his pocket the cup he had bought in Moscow, Stoletov went into the kitchen and rinsed it carefully. Then he went back into the room, poured the cold tea from the old cup into the new one and put the former away in the cupboard. He imagined how surprised Varya would be at the mysterious transformation act.

He took a quick glance into the boys' room and the tiny "cabin" where Ivan Konstantinovich used to live. That room was almost bare; the old man had taken nearly all his possessions with him. In the boys' room, last year's school time-table hung over the desk, last year's copy-books lay on the desk itself. Some small fish swam slowly in a tank on the window-sill.

Nothing had changed, yet the flat seemed deserted. The silence, too, was unusual; before, it was quiet only at night but now the morning sunshine flooded into the room through the bare, leafless boughs of the poplar. The poplar had been leafless too when Stoletov had left for Verkhnyaya Kamenka but then there were shiny sharp-tipped buds on the tree.

Stoletov felt sad as he moved alone through the empty flat. How did Varya live there? Surely she must find this silence, this lack of company, oppressive. The poor dear, looking at photographs of her loved ones, reading and writing letters, waiting for the holidays. . . . But she was not one to give in; Varya could be obstinate. She was not going to the place where her loved ones waited for her and where she herself, most probably, longed to go. . . .

Stoletov sat down at the desk and scribbled a few lines:

"Dearest Varya, I've been in Moscow on business. Flew there but going back by train. Dropped in for a moment in the hope of catching you at home. Can't wait; don't want to miss the train. Had a good trip, will tell you all details when I write. Love and kisses. Your Stepan."

He looked around for a place to put the note and slipped it under the cup. With one more glance around the room, he slammed the door behind him and ran down the stairs.

"Back to the station and drive like mad. The train leaves in seven minutes."

Andrei and Kovalev stood near the door, anxiously scanning the passengers coming along the platform. Where could Stoletov have got to? Surely he wasn't going to miss the train? The engine had been coupled long ago, the train's departure time had been announced by loud-speaker, yet there was no sign of him. The conductor shared their anxiety; climbing up the steps of the coach, she looked towards the station buildings.

"Here he is," she cried. "Running across the lines instead of using the tunnel. He'll manage it all right."

The train was already on the move when Andrei took Stoletov by the arm and helped him up the steps.

"Hm, what have you been up to, Stepan Demyanovich?" chuckled Kovalev. "We looked everywhere for you. In the restaurant, at the book-stall, in the post-office."

"I decided to drop in home," said Stoletov. "I thought I might catch my wife in but missed her. I expect she's at school. I meant to pick up a few books but didn't have time to dig them out, so I might as well not have gone."

The train was running fast; now they were among hills covered with forest; the line followed the winding course of a mountain river. The river ran too fast to have frozen; but near the bank where the current was slower the ice was piled up in a white fringe against the boulders.

Chapter Fifteen

1

They had only a week's happiness before them but Nikolai and Nina behaved as if they were setting up house together for the rest of their lives.

After seeing Andrei leave for the airport, Nikolai ran straight to hospital.

"Ready?" he asked, peeping into Nina's room. "I'll carry everything over. Just hand me that basket."

He tied a heavy bundle of books on to Nina's suitcase with a strap and shouldered the load. Then he picked up a light blanket roll and with his free hand took a small basket of odds-and-ends.

"Is that all?" he asked, looking round the room. "Let's go, then."

On the way it occurred to Nikolai that he ought to have tidied the hostel room which Andrei's departure had left in a complete mess. Now it was too late: Nina was hurrying along beside him, quiet with suppressed excitement; he couldn't very well leave her kicking her heels in the street while the chambermaid tidied up.

"I'm afraid the room's in a terrible mess," he said as they went upstairs. "Don't be angry with me for having nothing ready."

The only preparation Nikolai had managed to make was to buy something for supper. His pocket bulged with parcels and he held a long golden-brown loaf under his arm.

"Let me carry the loaf," Nina suggested as they came along the street. "You might crush it."

But Nikolai would not let her take it. He wanted her to walk beside him swinging her arms: a wife walking beside her husband who was carrying all the load of their married life.

The room really did look a wreck: the floor was littered with old newspapers, the beds were unmade, there was a mountain of manuscripts and proofs on the writing desk. The place had never been so untidy; Nikolai stopped just inside the door, overcome with confusion.

But Nina, far from being abashed, seemed to enjoy the disorder. She slipped off her coat, rolled up her sleeves and set about tidying up, snapping out orders to Nikolai: "Go and get a broom," "Find a duster," "Put the suitcase where you usually keep it." She examined the room with a critical eye, declaring that the furniture was arranged in a very institutional way and that it ought to be shifted to make the place cosier.

"Go and ask Sasha to give us a small table: we can't work and eat at the same table. And let's have those boots out of the locker. We'll put them in the bottom drawer in the wardrobe. It's empty anyway. Then we can use the locker as a sideboard."

Nikolai thought that rearranging the room would be complicated and would take so long that Andrei would be back before it was finished. But Nina insisted on his asking Sasha for the table; a table was found; and, besides, a narrow sofa and two upholstered chairs. Nikolai and Sasha, with the help of the chambermaid, carried everything into the room; the chambermaid grumbled that it only needed a woman to appear on the scene for everything in the room to appear wrong; the two young men had never asked for a thing.

"All right, all right, you keep quiet and go and get the chairs," said Sasha impatiently.

Nina lost no time in moving the beds into a corner; she tried to turn the wardrobe round. The wardrobe was heavy; Nina grew red in the face from her exertions; she could not manage it alone.

"Ninotchka! You might strain yourself," cried Nikolai in horror. "Move aside and let me do it."

He and Sasha easily moved the wardrobe; where it had stood a patch of dust lay as thick as wool on a sheep's back; the stud Andrei had lost the day he arrived shone in the midst of it.

"So that's what you call cleaning," said Sasha as the dust swirled all over the room. "Bring a pail of water and give this floor a good scrub. Tomorrow I'll look under the wardrobe in every room."

The maid went off for the pail, slamming the door behind her; Nina pointed out where she wanted the rest of the furniture moved.

"What a lovely little sofa," she said. "Soft chairs, too. I hope you won't take them all away when I move out."

Nina spoke sadly as she recalled how short her stay was to be in that room. Nikolai caught her mood and Sasha, sensing the situation, promised that the new furniture would remain.

Nikolai found that rearranging a room can be done very quickly. In less than an hour the maid had scrubbed the floor and the room looked clean and tidy. Looking round, Nina proposed asking some friends in for a house-warming party. Nikolai recalled that he had bought plenty of good things; a fresh loaf with a nice crisp crust, ham in abundance, a big hunk of gruyère cheese, butter. The shopping, incidentally, had got him the name of being tied to his wife's apron-strings; this made him angry at first, though when he came to think it over he decided it wasn't worth bothering about.

What happened was this: he was waiting while the shop-assistant sliced the ham when Yuri Sharov hurried up and bought a sausage sandwich at the counter. Slipping his parcel into his pocket, he challenged Nikolai to a game of chess. Nikolai declined, adding proudly that he was expecting his wife to move in that evening. That made Sharov laugh; most fellows became tied to their wives' apron-strings when they got married, he said, and Nikolai had not escaped that fate.

Sharov, probably, didn't mean any harm; he may even have been a bit envious; he was courting a girl but hadn't plucked up the courage to propose—he was in the same situation as Nikolai had been once with Nina. All the same the remark stung Nikolai: was it really so noticeable that Nina bossed him?

So now, when Nina suggested asking people in that evening, Nikolai decided to find out whether Sharov was right.

"We'll decide whom to invite later," he said peremptorily. Now let's have supper."

Nina went meekly to their new "sideboard," squatted on her heels and took out some plates. From her suitcase she took a prettily embroidered table-cloth and a set of napkins and from the basket some home-made *pirozhki*, eggs and rissoles.

"Where can I get some boiling water?" she asked Nikolai, picking up the tea-pot. "No, don't bother, I'll go for it. You rest a bit."

If only Yuri Sharov could see him sitting at that prettily laid table with Nina serving him, pouring tea and choosing the tastiest of the *pirozhki* for him. Apron-strings, my foot!

"Don't think I'm no good at housekeeping," said Nina. "I can do everything. 'D'you like these *pirozhki*? I baked them myself in the hospital kitchen. And I can make soup too—mushroom soup, meat broth, any kind you like."

After supper Nina cleared the table and washed up; Nikolai dried as if it were the most important thing in the world. Nina meticulously wrapped the rest of the ham and the cheese in paper and hung the packet out of the window at the end of a piece of string, something that Andrei and Nikolai had never done—they simply put the left-overs in the cupboard. Nina made the beds, beating the pillows up and folding the blankets neatly. Only at home, only in his childhood, when his mother used to make his bed, had Nikolai seen beds look so inviting. Nina put out the top light and covered the table lamp with her scarf; the room at once became smaller, more intimate; the dark window, outside which the autumn gale howled, disappeared; the whole world disappeared except that room where the two of them were.

"Ninotchka, my darling, how wonderful it is to be with you."

Everything was quite different for them that night—their love-making was less hurried than it had been in the hospital room. And they spoke to each other straight from the heart, going into details about things that were highly interesting and important to them though to nobody else.

"D'you mean to say he never remembered you when you were little? Not once? Not on your birthday or on New Year's Day?"

"Not once, Ninotchka. Mother and I were on our own, except of course for Andrei and his father. Boris Ivanovich is a very, very good man."

"Did your mother hate your father when he left her?"

"I don't know. No, I don't think she did. She felt terribly hurt, that's all."

"I hate him, though. If he ever comes here and dares to call to see us, I'll turn him out."

"He's been here, Ninotchka. I realized then what sort of a man he is."

"Poor little Nik. How awful for you to know you have such a man for a father."

"It is. And it's something I can talk about only to you..."

"You must tell me everything, always. I love you so much. What soft hair you have and it's got a lovely smell."

"And your hair smells of hay with just a whiff of medicine..."

"And what if I started using perfume? Say I borrowed some scent from Zina? Why, you'd mix me up with her!"

"Mix you up with Zina? That's what you deserve for saying such things. And that, and that..."

"Oh, stop, Nik. I'll scream if you go on. I'll yell for the chambermaid. She'll bring you to your senses..."

Could such happiness last a whole lifetime? Were they going to be together like this all the time until Andrei returned from Moscow? Would it be like this later on when they had their new flat?

Everything went wrong for Nikolai on the day it became known in the factory that Stolelov and Andrei were on their way back: one of the turners spoiled several castings: there was a mistake in one of the blue prints on the new order and Nikolai did not spot it and passed the blue print on to a turner, with the result that there was trouble; the personnel department transferred two girls from Nikolai's section to the new shop. The girls did not want to leave, they even cried as they begged to be allowed to remain at their present jobs. Nikolai also wanted them to stay and had a violent argument with the personnel manager. Nothing came of it, however, so Nikolai went to complain to Syurtukov.

"They were quite right to take them," said Syurtukov, not looking up from his work at the bench. "An old worker like you ought to share trained hands with a new shop."

"Me an old worker?" Nikolai said incredulously, tapping himself on the chest. "How long have I been that? I've worked only four months at the factory. I've just managed to get my own personnel problems settled."

"Four months is no short time," Syurtukov retorted calmly. "It's not right for you to be playing the pauper. You've had your workers with you for quite a long time and your section's gone up to the top. Shame on you, not sharing with the new shops."

"Very well, then," said Nikolai restrainedly. "I'll have a talk with Comrade Stolelov when he comes tomorrow. I don't know whether he'll agree with you. I don't intend to squander my workers; they didn't fall into my lap, you know."

"All right, you have a talk with Stolelov," Syurtukov said amiably. "But he won't support you, you'll see."

Feeling upset by this conversation and disappointed by all the events of that day, Nikolai made his way home after work. As he walked, he reflected that this was to be the last evening, the last night with Nina in the Stalingrad; with Andrei's return, Nina would have to go back to the hospital, and then they would only be able to see each other for short spells at a time.

Poor Nina, he thought with tenderness and longing. It was worse for her than for him. He had Andrei's company, but she had to listen to that chatterbox Zina.

Nikolai entered the room feeling saddened and softened by these reflections; he embraced Nina tenderly when she opened the door to him.

"See how early I am," he said with a kiss. "I simply rushed back. You've only just got back yourself, haven't you?"

Nina was still in her hospital smock, her attaché case lay on the dining table and she had her kerchief in her hands.

"No, I came back early today. I've been studying. Now I must run over to the hospital for a minute: Maria Borisovna has promised to have a look at my lecture."

For the past fortnight Nina had been preparing a lecture for a nurses' training course. Everything was written out, the first pages memorized. At first in secret, then with Nikolai as her only listener, Nina rehearsed the whole lecture, trying to adopt the voice and manner of her favourite lecturer at college. Everything was ready; Nikolai had approved of it all

and now it turned out that Nina would have to spend their last evening at the hospital again, working on that lecture.

"I thought we'd spend this evening at home," Nikolai said sadly. "You haven't forgotten that Andrei's coming back tomorrow, have you?"

"I won't be more than an hour. You know how important it is for me. Maria Borisovna is always so busy and she could only spare me the time tonight: her husband's going somewhere and she's promised to come down specially to look at my lecture. Take things easy till I come back. Just for an hour. I simply must get Maria Borisovna's advice. I want the lecture to be so good that it will really grip the audience."

"Audience!" smiled Nikolai. "A few girls from over the lake, Tonya and a couple of housewives. And you're prepared to forget everything else in the world for such an 'audience.' But I won't let you go alone; I'll walk with you to the hospital."

They walked arm in arm along the dark streets. Nikolai told Nina of his chapter of accidents and now they seemed less serious. Did it really matter if they took away the two turners? Was it really such a catastrophe that one had mucked up a job? As for the mistake in the blue print, he'd have something strong to say about the work of the designing office at the next production meeting. What did they think they were up to?

They reached the hospital. There was a light burning in the consulting room of the duty-doctor. That meant Maria Borisovna was waiting for Nina.

"Don't go away," said Nina. "I'll soon be back. Sit in the waiting-room."

There were two girls sitting on the porch and when Nikolai and Nina mounted the steps they leaped up and made a dash for Nina.

"We came to see you, Nina Sergeyevna. Please help her. Maria Borisovna wouldn't."

The girl who spoke wore a large white shawl. She pointed to her companion who was similarly clad. The other girl did not open her mouth; her eyes were full of entreaty and she looked as if she was on the point of tears.

"She left school when she was in the fifth form and Maria Borisovna won't take her. She told her she ought to do two years' more schooling. But by the time she finishes, the nursing course may be over. And she's terribly keen. It's the dream of her life."

Nina looked stern and resolute.

"There's nothing I can do to help you, Katya," she said. "We have a very strict rule—only to take girls with seven years' schooling. We haven't the right to make exceptions."

"But she's awfully clever, Nina Sergeyevna. She's terrible: she reads everything, she even writes poetry, word of honour she does. Five of us living on the other side of the lake have enrolled for the course, and she's our friend. It's a shame to leave her out."

"Then let her go to the evening school for young workers," said Nina. "Then you can all come across the lake together. Good night."

Nikolai marvelled at Nina's manner of speaking. Her voice was firm and unflinching, her bearing authoritative, her face serious.

With an involuntary feeling of respect Nikolai flung open the door for her and Nina floated into her hospital with regal dignity. In the dark empty waiting room she turned round to Nikolai and said triumphantly: "Did you hear that? And you dared to make fun of my audience."

2

It was in Moscow that Kovalev suggested Andrei should share his flat with him.

"Why don't you move in, Andrei Borisovich? I've a big place, my family's gone for good and I'm lonely on my own. . . . Take whichever room suits you and fix it up for yourself."

Andrei agreed. They decided that he should move in as soon as they returned; when the car drew up at the factory gates Kovalev handed Andrei a latch key.

"I must drop into the shop for a moment. You go straight home, make yourself comfortable and rest."

But Andrei preferred to go to the print-shop first, hand over his presents and take a look at the issue of the *Tribuna* that had been made up in his absence.

Lights were burning in the editorial office and in the print-shop; from the corridor Andrei heard the clatter of the press. So not everybody had gone home. Andrei suddenly realized how much he had missed that noise, the smell of ink, the company of his fellow-workers. He opened the door of his office and saw them all at once: Vanya, Valya, Polina and the two girls sitting in a row at the table. The room was exceptionally tidy and looked quite festive.

"Our information was correct," cried Vanya exultantly, hurrying forward to greet Andrei. "Welcome home."

"We knew the moment you'd left the train," said Polina gaily. "Our contact on the railwaymen's paper rang us up as we'd arranged."

"You should never reveal the source of your information," Vanya said disapprovingly. "You're always blurting out things. You don't know how to keep editorial secrets."

Andrei put down his suitcase and shook hands with everyone, he looked into the print-shop, greeting the printer and ran his eye over the damp, newly-pulled proofs. The exciting feeling of having come home did not desert him. He noticed every novelty and every old familiar detail: the pile of used half-tones on the window-sill, the unpainted plank floor which they had so often promised themselves to do something about but never did, the lampshade with the chipped edge.

He opened the suitcase and ceremoniously handed Polina a small narrow box tied with ribbon.

"A greeting from Moscow, Polina Georgiyevna," he said. "Some finery for you."

Polina opened the case and blushed with pleasure: by electric light the bronze roses glittered like gold.

"Thank you, Andrei Borisovich. Quick, girls, come and see what lovely things I've got."

But the girls were gazing at their bead bags; no one in all Verkhnyaya Kamenka had anything like them. Valya, suppressing her

disappointment, turned over the contents of the sewing basket; the editor must think she was quite an old thing buying her a present like that!

"The tie's first rate," said Vanya. "I've a new shirt with mauve stripes; it'll go beautifully with it."

How pleasant it was to do others a good turn. Andrei was glad that he had thought of bringing presents; it made him somehow feel older than anybody else in the room; the only embarrassment he felt was with the printer. The old man thanked him somewhat reservedly but at once stuck his cigarette into the new holder.

Then, after locking up the print-shop and the office, they all went over to the Stalingrad together.

"There's no light burning in your room," said Vanya, looking up. "Nikolai Nikolayevich probably doesn't know you've arrived."

Andrei went upstairs. On the way he met Sasha, who was smiling all over his freckled face.

"Hello, Andrei Borisovich. Glad to see you back. Your young friends have just gone out. We haven't had time to tidy up after them."

Sasha was genuinely glad to see him and Andrei shook hands with special warmth. A good fellow, Sasha. The things he did were modest and unnoticed but he did them with love and enthusiasm and took real trouble over the people who lived in the Stalingrad.

"Tidy up? As if that mattered," Andrei said. "I've come for a minute, that's all. I'm moving."

"Moving? When did you manage to get another place to live in?"

"It was arranged in Moscow—by special decision of the Council of Ministers."

Sasha looked incredulous but Andrei's face was quite straight.

"W-e-e-ell, if a man distinguishes himself it's quite feasible that the Council of Ministers should do something for him. What flat are you getting?"

"Haven't decided which to take. For the time being I'm borrowing a room from the manager of the first machine shop."

Sasha thought for a moment then his face lit up and he said:

"Kovalev, you mean? He's got a lovely flat though it's farther from the factory than the Stalingrad. Take that corner room with the balcony—that'd suit you, it's nice and light."

Still uncertain whether Andrei was in earnest or not, Sasha accompanied him to the door of the room.

"Are you moving tonight?"

"Yes."

Andrei entered the room. Nikolai and Nina had just left. The window was open and the autumn breeze played with the curtains; Andrei's books and notebooks were neatly stacked on the writing desk; a branch of cedar stood in a vase that was new to Andrei. There was a round table and a small sofa, and the beds were concealed behind the wardrobe—those two had settled in comfortably. They probably felt wretched at the prospect of leaving their little nest. . . .

Andrei, however, did not feel at all badly about leaving the room. He actually wanted to go—to get farther away from various memories, from everything that he had mistaken for happiness, only to find it turn

into sorrow and disappointment, from that window, those walls, every crack in which he had studied and restudied during bitter sleepless nights.

"Nik, go straight to the hospital and bring Nina back," he wrote. "I've promised Kovalev that I'll go and live at his place. He finds it dull being alone in that big flat; he's invited me to share. You live here and stop making a scape-goat out of yourself—you're quite wrong if you take me for an injured lamb that has to be nurtured and shepherded. I'm going to shepherd Kovalev and live royally in a magnificent room. You'll come and see me and I'll return your visit. Love to you both from all in Moscow and from me. Andrei."

He left the note on the table with his parcel from Moscow, switched out the light and closed the door behind him.

"Wait for me and I'll return," he sang out to Sasha as he handed him the key. "I must pick up my things but I've no time now."

He clattered down the stairs. He wanted above all to avoid running into Nikolai and the emotional scene that it would entail. Let the two of them be alone when they go into raptures about their luck—he'd go to Kovalev and start a new life.

He went up the staircase at Kovalev's house and rang the bell. Kovalev opened the door at once: it was clear that he had been waiting for his new neighbour to arrive.

"I was afraid you'd changed your mind," he said. "I've got used to the idea of having you in the next room but I was beginning to think I was going to be left alone again in this empty place."

The whole flat was lit up and the corner room—formerly the dining-room—had been got ready for Andrei; a divan-bed, writing table and a bookshelf had been added to the furniture. The dining table and the piano had been moved into another room. All associations with the past had been swept away and disposed of.

"I'm running a bath for you and the kettle's on. We'll take baths and then have tea and relax. Agreed?"

Kovalev looked at Andrei with some trepidation: how was he going to get on with this fellow who was young enough to have been his son? Would they become friends or would they live separate lives, each keeping to his own room?

Andrei, however, had no intention of keeping to himself. He at once felt quite at home in his new room. He tossed his suitcase on the divan, hung his jacket over the back of a chair and went into the bathroom to see whether the stove needed more firewood. He decided it did.

"Where do you keep the wood?" he called. "From now on I'm going to take charge of chopping and carrying the fire wood for the bathroom."

3

Nikolai saw Nina back to the hospital, put her things in a corner of the room and left, followed by Zina's scornful glance.

"Good-bye to happiness," said Zina. "Not to mine, of course. To yours. Actually, I'm very glad to see you back."

Still in her kerchief and overcoat, Nina sat at the table and burst into tears. It was so sad to have to leave the Stalingrad, to part with

Nikolai, with the room they had grown to think of as home. And as she cried, Zina let fly at Nikolai: fine husband he was, not able to arrange somewhere for his wife to live. He wasn't a husband, he was a misfortune. Zina would never marry anyone who couldn't provide her with decent living conditions.

"I don't care who you marry," snapped Nina, raising her tear-stained face. "Nikolai's a fine man, very fine. . . . You just can't understand, you're not capable of such feelings as Nikolai's."

"If those feelings of his make the person he loves sob her heart out, I don't give a drat for them," said Zina firmly.

"But don't you understand? He can't let down his best friend, specially when his friend's unhappy."

"Everyone has the right to found his own happiness on the unhappiness of another," said Zina solemnly. "You think I made that up, don't you? I didn't, they're the words of an old poet—Igor Severyanin. I think that's the right sentiment."

"Your Igor Severyanin was an idiot to write such rot," yelled Nina. "And you're just as bad for repeating them."

"Thank you," said Zina and got up. "I'll leave you to think over whether you're right, insulting someone who's feeling sorry for you."

Zina went out, leaving Nina to her thoughts. Of course, she didn't want to find her own happiness on someone else's unhappiness, but would Andrei really be so very unhappy? Was he going through such a bad time as Nikolai thought? Would it take him so long to get over losing that red-cheeked Lyuba Zvonaryeva?

There was an impatient knock at the door; Nina did not reply to it, did not even look up. A nurse, probably, to call her to work. Well, she wouldn't go. Let another doctor go. She wanted to be left in peace. Hadn't she the right to a fit of the dumps? But the knock was repeated; then the door opened, and in burst Nikolai.

"Nina! You alone?" he shouted. "Listen, I've got marvellous news. Andrei's gone to live with Kovalev. You can come back."

He picked up the suitcase, the basket and the blanket roll and dashed back to the door.

"Come on, come on. It was Andrei's own idea. He understood. Mother may have told him. But he's not at all put out. Just read his note and you'll see."

What was there to read, what to see? All Nina knew was that they should have been living together long ago so that she would not have to listen to Zina's poisonous remarks about her "vagrant-husband."

They walked back to the Stalingrad. Sasha handed them the key with a straight face.

"Stay on, I've no objections," he said drily. "But don't forget to register the change of address in the proper way tomorrow."

And so they were back in "their" room where the window was still open and the wind went on playing with the curtains. Nikolai showed Nina Andrei's note; they read it together, sitting with their arms round each other on the sofa. Wasn't it a shame to be so happy when Andrei had to go and live with a stranger?

"But you said yourself that Kovalev is a very nice man."

Nikolai tried to recall when he had spoken so favourably of Kovalev. He must have done so for Nina to be so certain of it. Andrei probably would be more comfortable where he was, he now had a big room to himself; he'd be able to ruminate and write his poetry undisturbed; after all, you need solitude for creative work, and at the Stalingrad Andrei was never alone.

"But it suits us to be together, doesn't it?" said Nikolai with a hug. "I don't disturb you when you're working on your lectures, do I?"

"I just couldn't work alone. I have to have you near me so I can ask your advice now and then.... Let's rearrange the place as we had it before. Quick."

Nikolai, however, wanted to go and see Andrei straight away; he wanted to talk to him and to find out whether the new place suited him.

"You unpack, Ninochka. I'll run over to him for a minute."

"I'm coming too," said Nina decisively. "I also want to see Andrei and find out how he is there."

She put on the new knitted hat, the new scarf, the new mittens--they were so pretty that she couldn't wait for the winter to put on her presents. Off they ran, holding each other's hands and making plans about what to do if there were no lights on at Kovalev's place.

Stoletov had just telephoned to congratulate Andrei and to wish him all happiness in his new home.

"Ivan Konstantinovich and I are having tea together," he said. "Just the two of us, sitting up late like old fogeys. The twins are asleep. Well, good night, see you at work tomorrow."

"Good night, Stepan Dem'yanovich."

How good it felt to lie on a sofa after a long train journey--a sofa that did not bump and rock like a berth in the train. The room was quiet except for an occasional cough from Kovalev next door; though the light was still on and he held a rustling newspaper in his hands, Andrei's eyelids kept drooping. Something seemed to be glittering and sparkling in front of them--the bronze roses that he had given to Polina. Andrei reached for them but they tinkled, rolled away from him and fell to the floor.

"Andrei Borisovich," Kovalev was tapping on the door. "Are you awake? You have visitors."

Springing up without realizing where he was, Andrei threw open the door. Nikolai and Nina stood in the hall smiling confusedly.

"We've come to see you," said Nikolai, stepping forward. "You can't have thought I'd turn in without coming over to see you."

Nikolai paid no attention to Andrei's tousled hair or to the fact that he was bare-foot and stripped to the waist. He did not notice how Andrei dashed back into the room to grab the rest of his clothes. He followed Andrei with only one feeling--a feeling of guilt about his own happiness, a happiness that even separation from his best friend could not damp. They had been together all their lives and now, suddenly, they were apart.

Dressing hurriedly, Andrei called to Nina that he would be ready in a moment.

"Right away, Nina. Come in. I'm sorry about the mess."

He turned round and saw Nikolai's guilty face. It was not the foreman of the turnery, not Nikolai Nikolayevich Zhukov, mechanical engineer, but a kid known as Nik, his schoolboy chum who was looking at him with so much concern in his grey eyes. Andrei realized at once everything that Nikolai was thinking and feeling, he understood Nikolai's perplexity and it made him glad.

"I was sure you'd come," he admitted. "I've been waiting all evening for you, though actually I fell asleep. Why don't you come in, Nina? I'm quite fit to be seen now."

He shook hands with Nina, put his arm over Nikolai's shoulder and invited them to sit down at the table. Then he sat on the divan with his bare feet tucked under him.

"See what a fine place I've got? Nice room, don't you think? Better than yours. So don't think of me as a miserable exile."

"I don't," said Nina. There was a resolute look on her face. "I must admit frankly that I've always thought it was high time Nikolai and I had a place of our own. I think that way now too. But I'm worried because Nikolai thinks we've treated you badly somehow. Let's get it straight: Are we really behaving selfishly or is everything all right?"

Nina looked serious as she waited for Andrei to reply. Her brows were drawn together in a single line, her full lips were tightly compressed; her fists were clenched.

Yes, she really did love Nikolai, Andrei thought enviously. The explanation she wanted was not for herself but for Nikolai. She knew very well that everything was all right. He, Andrei, was the selfish one, a real monster of egoism; with all his private worries he hadn't noticed that he was standing in the way of other people.

These thoughts just flashed through his mind; he had no compunctions in speaking them aloud.

"I'm awfully sorry, you two, that I didn't realize earlier I ought to move. It's always like that: if a chap thinks too much about his own misfortunes he becomes blind to what's going on around him. Why didn't you give me a good jolt earlier, Nina, so that I'd stop thinking I was the only person on earth?"

Nina went on looking at Andrei severely.

"I'm glad you've admitted your mistake," she said. "Now you've got to convince Nikolai that it really was a mistake."

"I'll do that straightaway. Stop being mad at me. I'm guilty, I recognize that."

Andrei jumped up from the divan, buttoned up his coat and stretched out his hand to Nina.

"Shake! And stop defending Nikolai against me. I'll drop in on you tomorrow. Is that all right, Nina?"

"Please come," said Nina. "I'll make some fritters. It'll have to be on the electric ring, though. We haven't got a kitchen at the Stalingrad."

Andrei found himself thinking that Nina was a fine, good-hearted girl. She had one odd trait, though: she was too quick to jump to the defensive. She was like one of those sparrows you sometimes saw that ruffled their feathers and thought everybody would be frightened of them.

"Don't bother about the fritters. I'll come in any case."

He flung his arms round the two of them and drew them to the divan where they all sat cross-legged.

It was great fun sitting there -- all three -- eating sweets from Moscow, looking round the room which had so suddenly become "home" to Andrei and listening to his account of Moscow, about how he had spent his evenings with his father and Maria Mikhailovna who had questioned him about Nina and Nikolai.

"Did you see my father?" Nikolai asked.

"I did," said Andrei and at once all of them felt uncomfortable. "I saw him several times."

"What did he talk about with you?"

"He asked me whether we were as good friends as we used to be. He probably thought you were sore at me about that article. I told him we were good friends and always would be."

4

Early one morning before the sun had risen, Andrei woke up and looked out of the window. Something white was stirring beyond the window panes as if a heavy curtain had been lowered on the outside. Springing out of bed, Andrei opened the window and breathed in the clean, fresh smell of snow. The snow fell like a thick shroud, slowly and noiselessly. It had evidently been falling all night for now it lay on the ground, the roofs, the branches of the trees.

All desire for sleep had left Andrei. He switched on the light and started writing a letter to his father. He gave him his news, that he had sent a long article to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* a few days ago, that he played chess with Kovalev every evening and that he had ordered a new suit.

"Please tell Maria Mikhailovna that Nikolai and Nina are well and working hard. Nikolai's section is soon getting a new order parts for Kovalev's machine. Nikolai's received the blue prints and is studying them. He wants to be ready in good time so that the work can go straight ahead. Of course, it wasn't easy for him when he learned what tricks Zhukov had been playing with the Kovalev invention. Now he wants to redeem his father's guilt. . . . No more news except that we had snow here last night."

His letter finished, Andrei went outside. The sun was rising; the morning hooter had just gone. A snow plough was driving its broad blade through the downy drifts, cutting a way to the factory; with happy shouts school children were clearing away the snow round the school. As he walked on, Andrei was astonished to see how complete had been the transformation during the night: yesterday everything around had been brown and ugly, with the bare bushes trembling in the wind, and the frozen surface of the lake a cold mirror of blue; but today everything was white, downy and sparkling.

For a second Andrei remembered that during the summer Lyuba had advised him to buy skis and had promised to show him the hill where there was a splendid place for making jumps. Now he would not be going skiing with Lyuba: she was married, her name was no longer Zvonaryeva but Nikitina; Andrei had no intention of being odd man out.

Before going to the office, Andrei called on Nikolai. The shop looked bright and clean with the sunshine pouring in and dancing brightly on the metal lathes and piles of completed parts, and lighting sparks in the stones of the girls' ear-rings. Next to the board of honour hung a large glass-fronted frame containing the photographs of exemplary workers.

Andrei stood for a few moments at this frame; familiar faces smiled at him from it with friendly understanding. The only exception was Dusya Syurtukova—the camera had given her a mocking, supercilious look.

"Oh, I'm glad you've come," said Nikolai, catching sight of Andrei. "Come over here, I've something to show you."

He led Andrei to his desk and took out a folder on which was written "Shrew." Inside the folder lay blue prints and a sheet of paper covered with notes in various hands. These were the rationalization proposals put forward by the turners Vladimir Nazarenko, Yelena Protasova, "Uncle" Misha and a young worker who was a new-comer to the section.

"D'you see," asked Nikolai. "These mean a saving of hundreds of working hours. And there are more to come."

He shut the folder and laid it in front of him.

"Don't imagine my knowledge of the Kovalev machine is limited to the parts that we have to work on in this section," said Nikolai. "I know that machine down to the last screw. While you were in Moscow the designing office showed me everything. And I've studied the whole affair in much closer detail than your article was able to cover. I've seen the prototype lying out there in the factory grounds. . . . Perhaps you think it was all the same to me how the campaign for Kovalev's machine ended. Believe me, Andrei, no one wished you success more than I did. . . . And no one feels as guilty before Kovalev as I do. . . ."

Nikolai's voice shook; he looked down and gave all his attention to sharpening a pencil. He went on chipping away at it until the lead broke; Andrei took the pencil from Nikolai and shook him warmly by the hand.

"Stop it, Nik. Get all that out of your mind," he said. "You know very well that a son can't be held responsible for his father's behaviour, especially in circumstances like yours. That Zhukov lives his own life and you're in no way responsible for his conduct. You'd do better to tell me what innovations you're going to introduce into your work on this order?"

"Above all I'm going to try and make up for the time lost through that other Zhukov's fault. In our own section we've worked out quite a lot of interesting things if we're not let down by the other shops. If we manage to make everybody work in step with us, the first machine ought to be leaving the factory in the spring."

He showed Andrei the proposed pledge of Socialist emulation which the turners had drawn up in advance; Andrei said he would like to print it in the *Tribuna*.

"We must think which shop would be the best for you to compete with over this order. Perhaps the foundry or the forge?"

"Yes, we've thought of that too; we'll go through with it all right. Especially if the *Tribuna* helps us."

Andrei went from shop to shop, talking to the workers, making arrangements for articles and items for the *Tribuna*, jotting down names,

figures, facts. Then he recollected that he intended to drop in at the club to see a rehearsal of *Wit Works Woe*. He wanted to see how a young draughtsman from the designing office would shape in his favourite role. Badly, he expected—as badly as he had played Chatsky himself. A difficult role, all he managed to make of it was an irascible dandy. He'd act better in it now, though: he understood how Chatsky must have felt when he learned of Sofia's betrayal and of her love for Molchalin. No, that was nonsense, Lyuba was no Sofia, her husband was no Molchalin and he himself was hardly a Chatsky. . . .

At the club, Andrei was told that the rehearsal had been put off. He heard the manager of the club telling Stoletov in the dark empty hall that it was impossible to go on using the building and that work ought to be started immediately on a real House of Culture.

"Our library's in a hopeless condition. Just look at the way the books are kept in that gorge of shelves and cupboards. We need a room to dance in, lounges. We've a billiard table but nowhere to put it; we had to give it to the restaurant. The brass band practises in a room next to the reading-room; there's nowhere for people to learn to play the piano."

"Play the piano?" Stoletov interrupted. "D'you mean to say there are people who want to learn to play the piano?"

His thoughts leaped to Varya: how good it would be to arrange a large bright music room, without any furniture if needs be, with nothing but a piano in it. Through the window there would be a sweeping view over the lake with the tops of the pines beyond and the distant mountains. In the spring the window would stand open and into the room would flow the resinous scent of the forest. . . .

Now everything outside smelt of snow. A cloud floated slowly far overhead against the starlit sky. It still glowed with the touch of a sunbeam that reached it, though the sun had sunk below the mountains. The snow crunched underfoot; columns of smoke rose straight into the air above the roof tops. The hooter went; it sounded unusually loud and piercing in the frosty air. A dark flood of workers poured through the factory gates to where the lit-up buses stood waiting.

As Andrei walked along the street he thought about the things he had to do. First of all he would have to set about editing the *Tribuna* properly: during all the recent excitements he had worked anyhow, without the flame of enthusiasm. The last issue was dull, with traces of resemblance to the paper of Chumov's days. He would have to get everybody with any spirit in him to contribute to the paper, people who loved their work and their factory. And poets, too; somewhere, quiet, in secret from everybody, poets must be writing verses about what they held most precious and beloved in life.

Perhaps behind that very window, under that softly glowing green lampshade, a young poet was sitting before a sheet of paper in agonized struggle to express his thoughts in beautiful phrases. Everyone who lived at Verkhnyaya Kamenka, who read the *Tribuna* ought to be able to find in its pages his own thoughts, his own feelings. Did its editor, Andrei Korolev, live and work and feel differently from all others? Of course, he didn't! He lived and thought just like his comrades and friends.

By the time Andrei reached the square it was quiet and empty. Floodlights were trained on the faded snow-dusted portraits that had been

hanging on the railings since the previous spring. Standing close together looking at them were two figures. Andrei recognized them at once in the light.

"Hello, you two," he shouted. "What are you looking at?"

He crossed to the centre of the square.

"When's Nik's face going up here?" asked Nina. "And what about mine? D'you think we'll ever get there?"

"I'm sure we will," Andrei said, and took them by the arm. "Anyway, we'll have a shot at it. Come along, see me home."

Together they walked along the long white road. Sometimes it was as smooth as a table-top, sometimes it was pitted with deep holes and hollows, and sometimes it was piled high with drifting snow. But they kept on their way, through the drifts and over the hollows, and when the road was even they strode along fast, keeping in step. The first frost of the winter nipped their faces, the snow squeaked underfoot, and the wind at their backs aided them and sped them on their way.

Translated by R.P.

Illustrations by V. Bogatkin



LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

KONSTANTIN SIMONOV

SOME PROBLEMS OF CONTEMPORARY PROSE

THE BIRTH of Socialist realism dates back to the pre-revolutionary era. It originated in the writings of Maxim Gorky, an artist who believed in the victory of the Russian proletariat and for whom the triumph of Socialism was not a Utopia but a hope of the immediate future.

Socialist realism as a method was shaped in the crucible of class struggle, it emerged out of the complex situation arising from the building of Socialism in our country and proved itself a militant weapon in the armed struggle against fascism. It is a method which precludes a "wait-and-see" position, a position of neutrality, of observing from the sidelines. On the contrary, it presupposes that the artist identify himself with the popular cause.

The artist of Socialist realism, rejecting the charge of narrow-mindedness, believes that there is but one universal truth—the truth of the labouring masses battling for Socialism.

The literature of Socialist realism is entirely free from pessimism, for "the dry-rot and rust of pessimism," to quote Maxim Gorky, is scepticism, while faith, unwavering faith in the people, in the ultimate triumph of social justice is the very breath of the literature of Socialist realism.

And inasmuch as this literature is, in the broad sense, the literature of popular labour and popular exploit, we cannot conceive of it making a virtue of passivity, for example, or admiring scepticism, or championing selfishness, as forms of asserting one's "precious ego."

As in any other literature, the characters depicted in the literature of Socialist realism argue with one another, make mistakes, commit faults and even crimes, but in depicting all this, the author passes just and unequivocal judgement on his characters' behaviour from the standpoint of the interests of society as a whole.

Socialist realism does not gloss over reality, no matter how grim and repellent it may be. But for every feat of glory there must be a goal, for every sacrifice, a worthy cause, for every temporary setback, the prospect of coming victory.

Take Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*, a grim record of incredible hardships, of tormenting hunger and thirst. For a bourgeois writer, this would be ideal material for a harrowing chronicle of human suffering,—which, incidentally, is exactly how such themes as, say, Kornilov's Ice Campaign were, inevitably, treated by Russian emigré writers. But for

the Soviet writer, the cruelty and brutality of *The Iron Flood* epic was a step toward the victory of the Revolution and hence it was not a martyrdom but a heroic exploit.

Alexander Fadeyev fearlessly entitled his first novel *The Debacle* (*The Nineteen*), but the title, and indeed the story itself, was projected into the future, for it was not of the vanquished but of the victors that he wrote.

The life of Nikolai Ostrovsky as depicted in *The Making of a Hero* (*How the Steel Was Tempered*), had it appeared in bourgeois literature, would have been a gruelling history of the physical and mental anguish of a man who by all ordinary standards might be justified in succumbing to despair. Ostrovsky does not pass by this anguish, but his is a novel not about the man's illness and misfortune, it is the story of how his spirit was steeled, a novel of the beauty and majesty of the human soul.

If we examine the most dramatic pages of our literature, those describing the death of the hero, we shall find that with all their tragedy there is not a trace in them of the "dry-rot and rust of pessimism." This is true of *Kochubei* by A. Perventsev, whose description of the capture, illness and execution of Kochubei are among the most poignant scenes in our literature; it is true of the finale of A. Upits' *Light Through the Storm-Clouds*,—the death and solemn funeral of one of the leading characters Anna Osis; the death of Vlakhov in Ehrenburg's *The Storm*; of Bryansky in A. Gonchar's *The Standard-Bearers*; of the commissar in *The Story of a Real Man* by Boris Polevoy; of Alyosha in *Harvest* by Galina Nikolayeva; of Travkin, the soldier, in E. Kazakevich's *The Star*, who perishes along with his gallant detachment, and lastly, it is true of Fadeyev's *The Young Guard*. Death in Soviet literature is not simply the tragedy of physical extinction, it is the drama of a soldier who falls in battle before victory has been won; the drama of people who lose a fighting comrade. It is thus from the standpoint of the battle for the future that Socialist realism treats of the theme of death, which for bourgeois literature is a theme of the futility of human existence.

The aesthetics of Socialist realism has never demanded that the difficulties that beset man's path in his struggle for the future be glossed over or avoided. This can easily be shown by opening at random books relating to different periods of Soviet society: *Cement* by Fyodor Gladkov, written in the 'twenties, *Virgin Soil Upturned* by Mikhail Sholokhov, which appeared in the 'thirties, *Men from the Backwoods* by A. Malyshkin, published in the late 'thirties, or Azhayev's *Far from Moscow*, in the late 'forties. All these books tell not only of victories but of the effort it cost to achieve them.

The best Soviet books are those which tell of "real" people, of "how the steel was tempered."

Embellishing Reality

Socialist realism with its clear-cut approach to life, its appraisal of human behaviour from the height of the interests of society, is as far from temptation to look at reality through rose-coloured glasses as it is from morbid preoccupation with gloom and suffering.

Nevertheless the tendency to "improve upon" reality on the grounds that it was being presented in the process of development, appeared in the works of some writers, especially in the post-war period. The result was that "dressing up" of reality, that varnishing of the truth which is being so vigorously combatted at present both by the critics and the general reading public, and which is sometimes referred to as the "no-conflict theory."

This embellishing of reality in literature was the fruit of a certain complacency that had appeared in the life of our society, a sense of superficial well-being, an unwillingness to take a critical view of mistakes and shortcomings, of the negative and unhealthy phenomena which our society has not yet outlived. All this was most marked in books dealing with rural life.

The writers' mistake lay not in spotlighting the new and advanced element in village life but in making this new element, which does in fact exist in our village, appear to be something achieved on a country-wide scale instead of being as yet only a goal to be aspired to. All difficulties were presented as having been practically overcome with the result that the over-all picture was a rosy one.

While correctly choosing for their heroes the leading members of the rural community, men and women of energy and initiative who took charge of the great task of reviving the war ravaged collective farm economy, many authors did their best to play down and shift to the background all the negative features of life in the village. And with the general picture thus distorted, the leading characters too became much less convincing, since their successes were achieved at the cost of far less effort than the successes of their prototypes in real life.

The author's love for his leading character does not justify presenting him as a superior being towering head and shoulders above his fellow men who can only look up to him in meek admiration. It is this blind hero worship on the part of some writers that has given us novels in which against an otherwise realistic background peopled with live flesh-and-blood human beings there appears a sort of superman who accomplishes with miraculous ease what the ordinary mortals around him achieve only at the cost of supreme effort.

This exaltation of the individual in relation to the masses was manifested in a number of novels, among them the novels of S. Babayevsky, and in particular in the portrait of his hero Sergei Tutarinov in *Light Over the Earth*.

It cannot be said that Babayevsky does not know his collective-farm village, for his book contains some true-to-life descriptions of the serious blunders committed by the farmers in the process of restoring the collective farms, and some vividly drawn portraits of negative types in conflict with whom Tutarinov displays those very traits which endear him to the reader. Taking all this into account, Babayevsky's novel is not a complete distortion of reality; and although, judged by its literary merits, the book cannot be classed with the best Soviet novels, it should not be forgotten that, with all its defects, it was the first attempt to depict the initial stages of post-war rehabilitation of agriculture. And the writer who blazes new trails in literature has a hard task to perform.

True, even *Cavalier of the Gold Star*, the first and more successful of Babayevsky's two novels, evinced some alarming symptoms. To begin

with, too much emphasis was laid on Tutarinov's being a Hero of the Soviet Union, to a point where one was tempted to believe that the reward was not so much the result of his personal qualities as that his personal qualities were the result of the reward. As the story unfolds, the title itself combined with his position as chairman of the district executive committee come to play too important a role in determining his relations with those around him.

In the second book the author elevated his hero still higher, giving him more and more power to cope with his tasks, so that we close the book with the impression that all the problems in the countryside have now been successfully solved, and that it now remains only to hand out decorations to the deserving.

The Soviet writer who has mastered the method of Socialist realism sees both the bad and the good in people, but he admires those qualities in them which make for human progress; he does not shut his eyes to the baser sides of their nature, but he believes that the striving for the good and the beautiful is natural to man. He understands men's weaknesses, but he wants to teach them to be strong!

A Morbid View

But when a writer does not see, or suddenly ceases to see life in its revolutionary development; when a writer, assuming that he sees all, begins to concentrate on the shady aspects of life, on all that is foul and corrupt, and allots to it a place in his novel out of all proportion to the place it occupies in real life, the picture of reality thus presented is bound to be a twisted, distorted one. Such cases have occurred and still occur in our literature.

Among books which are built in one or another degree on the shifting sand of a false conception of people, books revealing a superficial knowledge of their characters and hence giving a one-sided view of them, one cannot but class Ilya Ehrenburg's latest novel *The Thaw*.

The book touches upon a number of problems which literature cannot ignore if it does not wish to avoid the sharp corners of life.

Ehrenburg maintains that Soviet people have no right to pass by injustice and falsehood on the grounds that justice is sure to triumph in the end without their intervention. The writer shows how loyal, honest Soviet people are often misjudged because of some oddity of character or because something in their past record is not to the liking of over-zealous officials.

In Zhuravlyov, one of his negative characters, Ehrenburg correctly shows that a man who does not love his fellowmen cannot be a leader. He upholds the right of Zhuravlyov's wife Lena to leave her husband when she realizes that to go on living with a man whose outlook is utterly alien to her own would be contrary to the standards of Socialist morality.

That the author did not shy away from these harsh facts, that a great many of the positive characters in his book are treated with warmth and sympathy is unquestionably to his credit.

Nevertheless, the book evokes the most conflicting emotions in the reader and in the end leaves him dissatisfied. The main reason for this is that although, on the face of it, the author seems to have intended his positive characters to typify the many, the context of the story implies that they are the exception. This impression is compounded of a host of details scattered throughout the novel, with the result that the positive characters come as a surprise to the reader just because they have so little in common with their environment. Much of what the leading characters say suggests that they have seen more bad than good in their lives, that in fact the bad has been the rule, and the good, the exception. And when one and the same book gives the general impression that life is becoming better and at the same time repeatedly emphasizes that the bad and the vicious is the rule and that good people are the exception, one begins to wonder where all the good in our lives comes from, whether it is due to the efforts of the people, the vast majority of the nation, or whether it has come of itself, without human agency? It is hard to believe that the author really wished to present our society in this light. But that is what he has done, and that is a fact which cannot be overlooked regardless of how excellent the writer's intentions may have been.

I shall not discuss here the treatment of art problems in *The Thaw*. I shall only say that the author puts himself in a curious position by making it appear that the characters peopling his novel live in a world devoid of real art. Is there really nothing besides the hack artist Pukhov and the aesthete Saburov to choose from? Is our art really so barren? An appalling thought! But it is enough to ask this question to see how utterly wrong is the general picture of art given in Ehrenburg's novel. Moreover, some of his views on art, if applied to literature, for example, would preclude writers like Ehrenburg himself for that matter. The view on our art expressed in the novel is unjustified not only with regard to the author himself, but to all other honest and talented Soviet artists, of whom we are justly proud, inasmuch as it is to their works, significant and purposeful—albeit not always perfect or free of error and weaknesses—that our art owes the role it plays in the life of our people and in world culture.

The Truth of Life

Any distortion of reality—whether by over-emphasis on the seamy sides of life, by objectivist impartiality or by embellishing reality—leads not only to aesthetic mistakes but in the final count to ideological flaws and blunders.

Socialist ideas cannot be based on untruth. A literature of ideas can only be built up on the truth of life. This is borne out by all that is positive in Soviet prose, by the portrayal in our literature of the finest men and women of the people, the difficulties they overcome and the successes they achieve in real life. And our literature abounds in such positive examples.

The Party has always maintained that education is the principal task confronting our literature as a whole, that people can be educated only by the truth and nothing but the truth. The method of Socialist realism arms the artist with the powerful weapon of truth—truth in criticism and truth in affirmation, truth that neither ignores merits nor closes its eyes to defects. It is not a matter of simple addition,

of totalling up the positive and the negative, but a weapon in the hands of the militant artist who flays evil in order to confirm good.

Carrying out this general principle, the writer, in order to translate the educational task he is confronted with at each given moment into tangible terms, must make every element of what he is writing commensurate with the scale and substance of the main tasks facing the country as a whole.

The Soviet people are now living in a period of the greatest creative endeavour in their history. Whichever of present-day developments we review—be it the launching of new production capacities in heavy industry, the starting of new power stations, the opening of new lands to cultivation, or the expansion of the output of consumers' goods—we are conscious of the onward surge of our country's life, the advancement of its economy and culture. And all this after bearing in the late war losses in both manpower and material values that defy comparison, after having been left with devastated regions, towns and villages where to this day the ruins and the countless acres of farm fields overgrown with weeds and brush testify to the recent enemy incursion.

When we say that in spite of these handicaps our industry has more than doubled its prewar level and speak of the millions of acres of virgin land put under cultivation in the course of the past year, we must visualize not only the results accruing from all this to every working man and woman of our country, but also, and primarily, the practical effort invested by the nation in its common cause.

What indeed is the mainspring of our country's advance? It is faith in our own powers, clarity of perspective, firm confidence in the stability of our Socialist relationships and in the triumph of our principles.

And how is all this reflected in the everyday life of the people? Not in solemn declarations, nor in eloquent assertions of loyalty to Socialism, but through men's labour. By his labour man reflects his mental world, his faith in Socialism, his understanding of the future of our society. One cannot but recall Maxim Gorky's words in this connection: it is the writer's task, he said, to glorify labour as the fundamental activity of man in our reality.

With creative labour as the soil which nurtures our society, the writer who wishes to march in step with the people cannot but make the depiction of man performing feats of labour the corner-stone of his art. Here we must avoid all schematism and vulgarization in defining the labour exploit theme in literature. All ready-made patterns, every variety of vulgarization only plays into the hands of those who would discredit the very theme, oppose men to machines and the world of the intellect to labour, claim that one cannot enter the world of letters riding a tractor.

Yes, one *can* enter literature riding a tractor, or a bulldozer, or a locomotive, or a combine. Everything depends on who is behind the wheel or at the throttle. The theme of labour exploits is a most human theme, for it treats of people's lives, their characters and their relationships. But the crux of the matter lies in depicting man's attitude to his labour, for this is the prime criterion by which we must judge him.

A person may be charming, handsome and gay, but if he is an idler, a deserter from the front-lines of the people's battle for its future, he cannot be regarded as a Man with a capital "M." A person may be a paragon of

leanings. The fundamental difference in their attitude to labour becomes the principal factor for the husband and wife in deciding whether they can continue to live together or not.

What a wealth of feeling, what a rich spiritual life is revealed by V. Ovechkin in his portrait of Martynov, hero of his sketches *The Daily Round in a Farming District*. Martynov enters upon his duties as secretary of the district Party committee at such a busy season that he can hardly find time to go home, yet how convincingly Ovechkin shows that Martynov regards his work not merely as a job, but a cause to which he is dedicated heart and soul. We see Martynov's personality develop in the course of this work, becoming more and more clearly defined and leaving no doubt in our minds that Martynov in friendship, in love, in every manifestation of his nature must needs be the same high-principled warm-hearted man we see addressing the meeting of the district Party committee.

Creative labour, it is true, occupies first place in the life of Soviet people, but not to the exclusion of all else. On the contrary, it makes his life fuller and richer, gives room for the development of all his emotions and qualities.

One wonders why it is that the best love stories are to be found mainly in Soviet books dealing with the past. Why is it that if you want to read a truly moving drama of unrequited love or of the happiness of mutual love you must turn to Fedin's *Early Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer*; why will you not find the story of Liza Meshkova and of Anochka Parabukina in books about our own time? After all, the tragedy of a great, selfless love like that of Izvekov's for Liza wrecked on the shoals of a petty, lukewarm emotion occurs nowadays too. In our time, people know such happiness as that Izvekov experiences on meeting Anochka.

Aside from the question of talent, why do we so rarely find in our present-day writing even an attempt to describe such a great, agonizing, I would say, courageous love as that of Aksinia and Grigori in *And Quiet Flows the Don*?

Have our emotions become shallower? Are there less dramas, emotional conflicts, yearnings and searching for happiness in our own lives?

True, personal life consists of many other problems besides love—motherhood, fatherhood, friendship, principles, richness or meanness of spirit. But the problem of love is the most controversial, inasmuch as it has been and still is the subject of so much pious cant on the part of our literary critics, so many of whom fail to see that love is an integral part of the spiritual life of the man of the new society and not simply a delicate subject for critical discussion, a dangerous but, regrettably, unavoidable appendix to the life of society.

Literary Methods and Trends

Socialist realism offers the widest scope for creative initiative, a broad selection of literary forms, genres and styles.

Some writers shy away from the suggestion that there can be a variety of styles and literary trends within the framework of Socialist

realism; they prefer to speak of different artistic individualities. But this narrows the conception of our literature.

Diversity of artistic individuality, incidentally, is something that is taken for granted by all but those who assume that Socialism means a levelling down to one standard. We, for our part, see no need to confine ourselves to such narrow bounds. Every outstanding artistic individuality in literature creates his own style.

A number of different artistic trends, some already established, others taking shape before our eyes, may be found in Soviet literature. We see them in poetry, in prose, in books similar in style and books with widely differing styles.

In considering the artistic development of writers such as Alexei Tolstoy, Mikhail Sholokhov, Alexander Fadeyev, Leonid Leonov, Konstantin Fedin, Andrejs Upits, Derenik Demirchyan, Andrei Golovko, Ilya Ehrenburg, Valentin Katayev, Konstantin Paustovsky, Mikhail Prishvin, Vyacheslav Shishkov, Mukhtar Auezov, Pavel Bazhov, we have every right to speak not only of the merits and defects of their work but of the specific literary style of each.

We have witnessed the emergence of the individual styles of a whole number of gifted writers of the middle and even of the younger generation of Soviet literature. For originality of style, some of them indeed stand in a class by themselves, viz., the remarkably lyrical work by Effendi Kapiyev, *The Poet*, A Bek's *The Volokolamsk Highway*, which is perhaps the only book of its kind ever written, or that very clever and extremely colourful book by G. Gulia, *Springtime in Saken*, to mention but a few.

At the same time, there exists a certain stylistic resemblance between the writings of different authors. Sometimes this is noticeable throughout the work of a given writer, sometimes in individual books.

Besides distinguishing one writer from another, stylistic principles very often lead to a certain affinity between the work of different writers. Without drawing any sharp dividing lines, or insisting categorically on the stylistic similarity of one writer to another, one can trace the beneficent influence of Sholokhov's stylistic principles on the work of several of our writers, viz., K. Sedykh's *Dauria*, or in *The Strogovs* by G. Markov, or *The White Birch* by M. Bubennov.

Similarly, I would say that Fadeyev's style makes itself felt in books by E. Kazakevich and G. Nikolayeva, two writers who differ from one another markedly in many other respects.

But it is not of course a matter of influences alone so much as of mutual influences, the affinity of styles and artistic methods as a result of a variety of circumstances. I believe, for instance, that there is much in common stylistically between Katayev and Pavlenko, particularly as story-tellers, just as there is a resemblance between the work of these two distinguished craftsmen and that of S. Antonov, who belongs to a much younger generation, and of an even younger prose-writer B. Bedny.

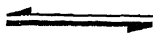
When I read the descriptions of working people by Azhayev and Kochetov, I am distinctly reminded of the style of Yuri Krymov and, at the same time, I observe that both Azhayev and Kochetov have a good deal in common.

It seems to me that the lure of the unexpected, of travel, chance encounters, partings, concentration on the plot and the romantic aura surrounding the heroes, all make for a kinship between the work of Paustovsky and Kaverin.

I find, too, that V. Panova and V. Nekrasov are much alike both as regards their merits and their defects.

In observing the multiform development of our literature, we must also take note of the literary trends that take shape, develop and then merge with others and disappear. This will help us to understand the general process of literary development and the creative bonds and mutual influences at work within it.

The existence within the framework of Socialist realism of different artistic trends, developing on the basis of healthy creative emulation, is perfectly natural and legitimate. And while affirming the basic features common to all artists of Socialist realism, features testifying to identity of *method*, we categorically reject any vulgarization of the question, any attempt to level down our literature, to make all writing conform to one pattern, in other words to reduce the whole wealth of our literature to one mechanical standard.



AUTHOR OF EPIC NOVELS

Mikhail Sholokhov — 50 Years Old

“ON THE sandy slope of the left bank of the Don, overlooking the river, lies the stanitsa of Vyoshenskaya, the oldest of the stanitsas on the upper Don. . . .

“Opposite Vyoshenskaya the Don bends, like a Tartar bow, seems about to turn right, but by the hamlet of Bazki majestically straightens again and carries its greenish-blue waters past the chalky foothills on the right bank, past the thickly clustered hamlets on the right and the rare stanitsas on the left, down to the sea, to the blue Sea of Azov.

“Vyoshenskaya stands among dunes of yellow sands. . . . Where the river bends towards Bazki, a lake as broad as the Don at low water runs into the willows. At the edge of this lake Vyoshenskaya ends. . . .”

Here, in the beloved Don steppes of his childhood, which he has glorified in his books, among the people about whom he writes, Mikhail Sholokhov lives and works.

Sholokhov appeared on the literary scene in 1923 with a collection of short stories entitled *Tales of the Don*. His next book, *The Azure Steppe*, also a collection of stories, was published in 1925 and contained a brief autobiographical note which informed the reader that the author had been born in 1905 in the hamlet of Kruzhilin, near Vyoshenskaya, on the Don. His father had originally come from the gubernia of Ryazan; his mother was locally born, half Cossack.

“I attended various schools until 1918,” Sholokhov relates. “During the Civil War I was on the Don. . . . Worked as a rank-and-file member of a food detachment for some time. We hunted the gangs of bandits that overran the Don region until 1922, and they hunted us.”

Thus Sholokhov came to know life, taking a direct part in the people's struggle. In the thick of events from boyhood on, he stored up a vast fund of impressions. His subsequent description of the severe trials that the member of the food detachment faced so staunchly in *And Quiet Flows the Don* is based on personal experience.

Later Sholokhov went to live in Moscow where, for a time, he worked at diverse jobs—labourer, bricklayer, book-keeper. “I began to work hard on my writing then,” Sholokhov remarks in his autobiography, “and some of my articles were printed in the youth newspaper *Yunosheskaya Pravda*. After the publication of *Tales of the Don* I became a professional writer.”

On reading those first stories of his now, we may be surprised by the affected style. The author inverted most of his sentences in an attempt to achieve melodiousness of speech, artificial rhythm. This, however, was only a beginner's deference to the literary fashion of the day. Sholokhov soon developed a simple and forceful style of his own.

The substance of the stories was straightforward and austere. The author showed that the Cossacks were not a homogeneous mass and depicted the fierce struggle that marked the years of Civil War. We see the Revolution upsetting the old way of life among the Don Cossacks; we see the forces regrouping, the past unwilling to surrender its positions and clinging desperately to life; we see the complexity with which the struggle of the new against the old was frequently reflected in the minds of men. *The Birthmark* tells how a Cossack ataman kills his son in a clash with a Red Guard detachment. This story does not bring out clearly just what divided father and son. But the general impression gained after reading several of the stories is that the young people broke with old prejudices more easily than the old, and that was the reason why members of the same family often belonged to opposite camps in the Civil War.

Having decided to write a long novel about the Don Cossacks, Sholokhov returned to his native region. First he lived in the stanitsa of Bukanovskaya, then in Karginskaya and finally settled down in Vyoshenskaya.

In 1928 the magazine *Oktyabr* published the introductory chapters of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The first volume of this novel, published soon after, immediately placed its author among the foremost writers of the Soviet Union. Sholokhov's novel, Gorky said, was a powerful work that would "go down in the history of new literature" and, with other books of the period, "presented a broad, truthful and talented picture of the Civil War."

The first volume of *And Quiet Flows the Don* gives a vigorous and colourful picture of life among the Cossacks before the Revolution. It portrays the development of revolutionary awareness among the poorer sections of the Cossacks under the influence of progressive ideas; it was these people who later became the principal force in the struggle to build a new life—an exceedingly difficult struggle under the complicated local conditions—and who won over the main body of Cossacks.

The characters in the novel reveal the distribution of class forces. Lined up on one side are the Listnitskys, landowners, the Korshunovs, rich peasants, Mokhov, a mill-owner—all of them implacable enemies of the Revolution and of Soviet power. On the other side are mechanic Ivan Kotlyarov, farm hand Mikhail Koshevoi and other Cossacks, those who set up Soviet government in their village.

In his portrayal of Grigori Melekhov and Aksinia Astakhova, Sholokhov depicted an unconscious but growing protest against the harsh old ways. Grigori is the embodiment of the mounting anger and hatred of a toiling Cossack for the entire social system of tsarist Russia. On the other hand, in Grigori the author has disclosed with great depth the contradictions and vacillations characteristic of broad sections of the Cossacks in those years. A gifted man of the people, but unenlightened—that is the basis on which Grigori's character is developed.

The most lucid and clear-cut appraisal of the Don Cossacks' past history finds expression in the observations of Shtokman, a Bolshevik who awakens the class consciousness of the poorer Cossacks, makes them aware of their place in the epoch-making developments that have stirred up the whole people and helps them organize the first Bolshevik group in the hamlet of Tatarsky.

Sholokhov depicts the class struggle on the Don in all its complexity, disclosing the interlacing of the class contradictions that split the Cossacks with deeply-rooted prejudices, stemming from the Cossacks' special position under the autocracy. The tsarist government made every effort to isolate the Cossacks from "seditious influences," to obscure in their minds the true nature of social relations and to divert them from the realities of the class struggle.

One of the finest achievements in the novel is the picture given of the Melekhov family. The Melekhovs are middle peasants, but the old tradition is very strong in them. It is this influence that drives Pyotr into the camp of the Whiteguards, confuses and misleads old Pantelei Prokofyevich, makes life so tragic for Grigori's mother Ilyinichna.

All the numerous men and women who stride through the pages of *And Quiet Flows the Don* are extraordinarily alive. The author is a past master at delineating human character in all its wholeness and with all its fine distinctions. He combines the epic scope of his novel with a lyrical quality of surprising beauty, managing to convey the subtlest and innermost emotions.

Grigori and Aksinia are tragic figures of rare power. In Grigori Melekhov, that tormented searcher for truth, we see the tragedy of a man who is, in actuality, fighting against his own happiness and the happiness of others like himself, a man confused and crippled by the forces of the past.

Sholokhov has centered the story on Grigori. Grigori is no simple character, easily classified for the critic's convenience as positive or negative. His basic qualities are good, but towards the end it is clear that he is a doomed man, doomed because he has lost touch with the people, because he has fallen behind the times.

Grigori's path is contradictory and complex. It is a path of ascent and descent, of hope and disappointment, and it ends in tragedy. It shows graphically that a man rises when he is on the side of the people, and that he is lost when he sets his own life against their interests.

Alexei Tolstoy paid high tribute to the author of this outstanding novel. "... Our literature has a wonderful talent in Mikhail Sholokhov," he wrote. "In *And Quiet Flows the Don* he has produced an epic painting, fragrant with earthy odours, of the life of the Don Cossacks. But the theme is much broader than that. Its language, sincerity, humanity and composition make it a work of all-Russian, of national, significance."

The author frequently relieves the dramatic intensity of the novel by beautiful landscape descriptions in a style peculiarly his own. Not only are the richness of the artist's palette, his profound understanding of psychology and mastery of the aesthetic laws of art revealed in these digressions; the atmosphere created by them is vividly expressive of Sholokhov's affirmative, optimistic attitude to reality, his faith in the triumph of all-conquering, constantly advancing life.

Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplturned*, a novel about the new village, is another outstanding contribution to Soviet literature.

The life-stories of its characters constantly echo the events described in *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Makar Nagulnov, Kondrat Maidannikov and others fought for Soviet power during the years of the Civil War. Andrei Razmetnov and Osip Kondratko rode through the insurgent villages of the

Don to Tsaritsyn in 1918 with Voroshilov's army. On the other hand, there are Khoprov, who served in a Whiteguard punitive detachment, and, heading the forces hostile to the Soviet Government, the former Whiteguard officer Polovtsev, an inveterate enemy of the labouring people, and the kulak Ostrovnov.

A number of years have passed since the Civil War on the Don. These are the first years of collectivization. The correlation of forces has changed basically. The class struggle has assumed other forms. The enemy has gone underground. In this novel, too, Sholokhov has given a faithful picture of the complex and bitter struggle that marked this stage in the development of Socialist society.

The story of the establishment and consolidation of the Gremyachye collective farm reflects developments of tremendous significance in the life of the people. The lives of the villagers are bound up with their kolkhos which is a particle of the pulsing, full life of the whole country. As participants in this full life, the men and women in the book decide and build their own lives.

True human beauty is revealed in the portrayal of the emancipated toiler. The positive characters in *Virgin Soil Upturned* are conscious that they are the owners of the land, the masters of their fate. They understand the value of their labour to the country, and their approach to problems that arise is based on the interest of the state.

In this process of change, the greatest impact, both intellectually and artistically, is naturally made by the Bolshevik leaders of the collective farm. Foremost among them is Davydov, one of the 25,000 workers sent to the village by the Party to help and guide it in its Socialist reorganization. This is among the finest portrayals in Soviet literature of a worker helping the peasants collectivize agriculture.

A Leningrad proletarian, steeled in the battles of the Civil War, a mechanic who worked at the Putilov Works for nine years following his demobilization from the navy, Davydov has brought the revolutionary traditions of the working class to the Don. In him the author embodies many of the valuable features of the new man. He stresses his qualities as a teacher. Davydov develops into a leader and organizer, capable of taking a man's measure, of gauging people's abilities, of perceiving their thoughts, understanding their innermost feelings, of moulding men and women into real Soviet patriots. He has firm faith in Soviet people and knows how to rally the most dependable men and women to the common cause, how to guide their development and gain their co-operation in day-to-day work with the body of collective farmers.

Davydov possesses the gift of being able to communicate the radiance of his hopes. It is he who helps Kondrat Maidannikov understand the bright new dream of the future, to feel the joy of unfettered labour for the welfare of the whole people, who are building a new life.

The middle peasant Kondrat Maidannikov has a significant part in the novel. In this Cossack peasant, one of the first to join the collective farm, Sholokhov has given us a profound psychological portrayal of the extremely difficult transition of the individual peasant to the collective-farm way of life, particularly among the Cossacks. The fundamental changes taking place in their life receive artistic embodiment in this figure. The old class prejudices, based on Cossack tradition, no longer have a hold on Kondrat; life, always moving forward, has wiped them

from the minds of the toiling Cossacks. But the break-up of the old order is an exceedingly complex process, and at every new stage there are fresh tasks and fresh problems to face.

The author draws a very sympathetic picture of Kondrat, of the brave struggle in which he emerged the victor. This portrayal of man's intellectual emancipation, of the triumph of the new individual who is conscious that he is part of the whole people is the underlying theme of Sholokhov's work.

The outbreak of the war found Sholokhov living in Vyoshenskaya. He immediately turned his energies to work for victory, never for a moment doubting that justice would triumph. He wrote stirring articles and stories for *Pravda*, *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and started a new novel—*They Fought for Their Country*.

And again love and hate form the main substance of Sholokhov's literary productions—the people's ardent love for their Socialist homeland and hate for its enemies. *And Quiet Flows the Don* arouses hatred for the accursed forces of the past. In *Virgin Soil Upturned* the author's wrath brands those who tried to check the Soviet people's progress, to turn them back. Sholokhov's writings about the Patriotic War are impregnated with impassioned hatred for fascism, for the barbarous enemy of the Soviet people who tried to fetter their free creative forces again.

The Science of Hatred, printed in *Pravda* on June 22, 1942, the first anniversary of the outbreak of the war, was imbued with the author's passionate love for his country, grief because of its wounds, irreconcilable hatred for its enemies. In a form new to him—the publicistic short story—Sholokhov showed how hatred grew among the people in the course of their fierce fight, instilling in the men at the front and in the workers in the rear an indomitable will to victory.

Sholokhov is a writer of extraordinary power and skill. His name is inscribed in the history of literature together with the names of other prominent Soviet writers.

With a broad picture of Sholokhov's literary production before us, we see both realistic accuracy of portrayal in general and a strict sense of proportion. Look closely at any one of the multitude of characters in his epic works and you cannot help marvelling at the preciseness and perfect authenticity of every detail. Each feature, each detail of the portrait is absolutely distinct, as if flooded by sunlight. The language of Sholokhov's characters is unusually expressive and no less authentic than their psychological and external portraits.

Sholokhov's books possess those features which, as Gorky said, the reader finds so fascinating in the classics—"an interesting plot, an abundance of observations and information, craftsmanship." Sholokhov's ability to convey the beauty and expressiveness of the language of the people, to impregnate his work with its life-giving power, is remarkable. Many of his striking figures of speech, metaphors and epithets are derived from the language of the common people. Lovingly, with the finesse of a great artist, he chooses his words, polishing them, bringing into play all the colours in which the folk idiom is so rich.

Profundity of idea-content, kinship with the people and literary skill are what give Sholokhov's works their popular appeal.

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

ANNA ELISTRATOVA

HOWARD FAST—WRITER AND CRITIC

JUDGING from the profundity of content and power of artistic integration revealed in a number of recent works by forward-looking writers of the United States, the aesthetic principles of Socialist realism are making themselves felt in progressive American literature. These works reflect the social experience, democratic traditions and national character of the American people in terms of its past, present and future.

Furthermore, a keen interest in aesthetic problems of Socialist realism is being manifested in numerous articles, books and theoretical discussions. The writings of Samuel Sillen, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz and Charles Humboldt in the past few years indicate that progressive American literature is aware of the problems of Socialist realism as a method and trend in art and, in dealing with them, is drawing upon the national, realistic tradition and upon the rich experience of the progressive literatures of other countries.

Literature and Reality

Howard Fast—a writer of unusually versatile talent—novelist, publicist, dramatist and literary critic—has made a significant contribution to the development of aesthetic theory in his country. The appearance of his *Literature and Reality* in 1950 was a major event in the history of American literature and an important achievement of the international progressive literary movement as well.

A summary of the past experience of America's democratic literary movement, *Literature and Reality* is at the same time a programme for the future. And it is this orientation towards the future that inspires the romantic fervour, characteristic of this study as of Fast's best fiction; it is this that inspires the deep feeling with which the author writes of the great vistas that social liberation will open to his people in art as in all other fields of creative historical activity.

Dedicated to the memory of the Marxist critics Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell, Howard Fast's direct British predecessors, both of whom wrote on the aesthetics of Socialist realism in the 'thirties, *Literature and Reality* is at the same time a link in a long chain of literary

studies representing landmarks in the theoretical and æsthetic quests of American democratic writers and thinkers, who, with different degrees of profundity and consistency, raised the same questions as Fast, principally the question of the relation of art to reality, to the struggles and aspirations of the people. In this sense it counts among its precursors Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, Frank Norris's *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*, Jack London's critical writings on literature, the undeservedly neglected essays written by Randolph Bourne about 1910, the journalistic writings of John Reed and Lincoln Steffens, the traditions of Marxist literary criticism evolved in the *New Masses* and *Masses and Mainstream* over a period of three decades, and the splendid heritage left by Theodore Dreiser, both as novelist and as literary critic.

Howard Fast does not examine the question of Socialist realism on the basis of abstract dogmas; he ties it up organically with the great changes wrought in the international situation since the Second World War by the increased strength of the camp of peace, democracy and Socialism, changes which stimulated remarkable advances in progressive literature all over the world.

Reactionary journalism and literary criticism in capitalist Europe and America have tried repeatedly to represent Socialist realism as a trend that can exist only in the Soviet Union. In other countries, they claim, it can appear only as a "Soviet export." Bourgeois newspapers and magazines not infrequently carry demagogic articles on the "export" of Soviet ideology to foreign countries. Like other progressive men of letters in the capitalist countries, Howard Fast exposes such fabrications, proving that the rise and development of Socialist realism in the contemporary progressive literatures of the capitalist world is firmly rooted in historical conditions.

"The question of Socialist realism cannot be separated from the existence of Socialism," he writes. "This does not mean, mechanically, that Socialist realism may be practised only within the geographical boundaries of the Soviet Union; quite to the contrary; but the existence of the Soviet Union is the determining factor in that qualitative change which makes Socialist realism possible."

Gorky—Example of Soviet Literature

In *Literature and Reality* and many other critical writings (especially *Realism and the Soviet Novel*, introduction to the new American edition of Gorky's *Mother*, *A Letter to Maxim Gorky*, and *What Soviet Literature Means to Us*), Fast speaks of the value the experience of Soviet literature, with its strong and richly developed traditions of Socialist realism, has for progressive American writers. He writes of Gorky with deep gratitude, as of a teacher and friend who taught him to understand both life and art.

"Gorky," he recalls in his introduction to *Mother*, "has had an enormous influence on me—more, I suppose, than any other foreign writer—and more than anything, he made me want to write."

He mentions the qualities in Gorky's work that impressed him most profoundly and helped him, a young, self-taught American worker, to rise

above the hopeless depression of his first story, *The Children*, in which he saw the life of the people only as "abomination," produced by black ignorance and desperate poverty. Gorky's staunch and ardent faith in the strength of the toiling masses—the creators and masters of life—was a source of inspiration to him.

Gorky's works revealed to Fast the unlimited opportunities the art of Socialist realism offers for creative foresight, perception, generalization and, even more, for actively changing the world. This concept of realistic art as a means of anticipating and bringing nearer the future for which the progressive artist fights together with the people and in their name is present in all Fast's writings on art. For, to Fast, the problem of discovering the social and historical laws that are preparing that future within the present is inseparably connected with the purely aesthetic problems pertaining to the realistic portrayal of events and processes in life.

In this respect Soviet literature serves him in a double capacity. Firstly, it is significant as a truthful mirror of Soviet reality, the reality of victorious Socialism. Fast states this with passion and conviction in his article *What Soviet Literature Means to Us*, published shortly before the Second U.S.S.R. Congress of Soviet Writers opened in December 1954. At the same time, as follows from many of Fast's writings on aesthetic theory, it has helped him in his search for a new method of realistic portrayal, whereby the writer could embrace the revolutionary development of contemporary reality, linking the lives of individuals with the broad and mighty progressive movements of our age.

Fast does not approach the experience of Soviet literature abstractly but in terms of the existing state of affairs in his own country, the social, political and cultural life of his people. His aesthetics is an illustration of the fact that a high sense of devotion to national interests does not hinder the progressive literatures of the world from sharing in the international achievements and common aspirations that unite all progressive humanity in the struggle for freedom and democracy; on the contrary, it helps them to do so.

The Fight Against Decadence

"The past, the present and the future exist not only in one world but very often in one nation," Fast writes. It is on the struggle between two nations within one, between two national cultures within one national culture in his country, in capitalist America, that Fast founds his creative programme for the development of progressive American literature on the basis of the method of Socialist realism. To imperialist America, which has taken the path of aggression and war, Fast contrasts the America of "the bitter, violent, restless American working class, carrying within itself the decisive seeds of tomorrow." To the anti-democratic, anti-realistic traditions of reactionary American literature he contrasts the glorious democratic traditions of Thoreau, Melville, Whitman and Mark Twain.

The aesthetic value of progressive American literature, Fast maintains, cannot be separated from the fight for the dignity of the working

man who has been slandered and debased by reactionary pseudo-art. And it is no wonder that the theme of the future rings out so strongly in all his work, fiction and non-fiction, even in his historical novels; for Fast the restoration of the dignity of man in the present is bound up with the advance to the future.

The process of man's growth, his spiritual development and active influence in changing the world is depicted in Fast's books in a variety of forms and on the basis of diverse subject-matter; this portrayal is a bold and convincing repudiation of the humiliating and insulting interpretation of the common people's freedom-loving aspirations prevalent in present-day decadent literature.

The irreconcilability and consistency with which Fast gives battle to decadence in *Literature and Reality* is a graphic manifestation of the growing maturity of progressive literature in the United States. Fast exposes the bankruptcy of reactionary, decadent literature, whatever claims to formal "innovations" and nihilistic "daring" in re-evaluating realistic and humanistic traditions it may make. He demonstrates that the so-called "new aesthetes'" contempt for the common man and retreat from reality inevitably result in the degeneration of their literary product. "Clarity becomes muddled and finally vanishes; style is cheapened as standards decay; triteness is accepted and constantly overlaid with unselfconscious self adoration; obscurity is raised to the level of a virtue, and action is logically shunned."

Fast illustrates the degeneration of literature that has separated itself from reality and is pursuing aims contrary to the interests of the people with examples from the different genres—detective stories and other "hogwash" fed the general public by commercial publishing houses—and from the literary output of highbrow aesthetes intended for a restricted *élite*.

Whatever new-fangled names or catchwords the different decadent "schools" and groups may flirt with in their effort to produce a semblance of creative movement, they all have this in common—their refusal to serve the interests of the people. "Thus, all the current aberrations in art, surrealism, dadaism, existentialism, cynicism, romanticism, vulgar escapism, the squirrel cage of the 'new poet,' the 'new critic,' the 'new writer,' the currently popular American schools of the unconscious, the brutal, the piglike, the instinctive, and the idiotic too—exist in relation to a standard-ethic that has lost all touch with the reality of our times," Fast writes.

Aesthetics and Ethics

An essential merit of Fast's theoretical concept is the emphasis he places on the relationship of aesthetics to ethics. The question at issue is not, of course, the rehabilitation of bourgeois moralizing against which the best democratic and realist writers in American literature, from Whitman to Dreiser, waged a relentless struggle. It is the restoration to its proper place of the social and human content of art, the return of its civic dignity, defiled and cast out by the decadents.

This, however, does not mean the mere revival of the humanist ethics of critical realism, which have been trampled and rejected by the deca-

dents, ethics in which sincere sympathy for the common people rarely exceeded the limits of exposure of the existing order or utopian dreams of establishing other, nobler, relations among men. Fast justly lays stress on the historical changeability of artistic and ethical standards. Neither artistic standards nor human ethics have any "mystical immutability." They arise "from the material conditions of life."

Thus, by applying historical materialism to various aspects of the relationship of literature to reality, Fast draws the conclusion that the time has come for the transition of realistic art to a new and higher stage.

Fast warns his readers, and more particularly the writers of America to whom his book is addressed, that the new aesthetic standards must be attained in the effort not only to understand reality but to change it. The truth does not hang like a ripe fruit, waiting for anyone to pick it. And, Fast says, this is true of the aesthetics of Socialist realism too. The truth must be fought for and taken in battle.

In the light of the aesthetic programme of Socialist realism set forth in *Literature and Reality*, Fast's own creative searchings and artistic experience are highly instructive, offering striking confirmation of his thesis that the aesthetic principles of Socialist realism open up new vistas to the writer.

Man and Social Environment

Today's decadent American literature usually represents people's actions as a disconnected and meaningless chain of accidents which ultimately change nothing in the life of society. Fast's writings on aesthetic theory and his best fictional works stress the opposite: no matter how modest or insignificant a man's actions may seem, how tragic his fate may be or how much historical circumstances may restrict the social purport of his activities, if his actions coincide with the course of historical progress, with mankind's general forward movement, nothing he has done has been done in vain.

In Fast's aesthetics the concept of the tragic acquires a meaning that is fundamentally new in American literature, for, according to him the artist's interpretation of the tragedy of the individual caused by concrete historical circumstances is not limited by those circumstances but is based on the much wider perspective of the entire history of the peoples' struggle for freedom. Fast maintains that the realist writer, truthfully portraying the social experience of his hero, is justified in introducing into that portrayal his own, far greater, social experience. For instance, he points out, in Gwyn Thomas's historical novel *Leaves in the Wind*, the death of the first Chartist fighters, the meaning and significance of which could not have been fully understood at the time, acquires true grandeur when the author interprets it in the light of the present day as part of the steadily ascending struggle of the toiling masses for freedom.

Illustrating this point, Fast takes an example from his own work as well. "The whole truth of Gideon Jackson in *Freedom Road* cannot be seen if the author develops him only in terms of his own tragic death;

for this reason, I attempted to make implicit in his own struggle the final—and still to come—liberation of his people," he remarks in *Literature and Reality*. He interprets the other episodes from the history of man's fight for freedom which form the subject-matter of the books he has written in recent years in the same manner. All of them, whatever their outcome, are regarded as rungs in the ladder to the stars, to the shining castles of the future, to use the author's own graphic expression.

The very epigraphs to Fast's novels and stories are characteristic, piloting, as it were, the story and its heroes into the broad channel of the history of the people's fight for freedom. *The Last Frontier*, a heart-breaking episode from the history of the American Indians' unequal struggle for the right to live, is dedicated to the memory of the author's father, who taught him to "love not only the America that is past, but the America that will be." *Freedom Road* is dedicated to "the men and women, black and white, yellow and brown, who have laid down their lives in the struggle against fascism." The author thereby establishes the continuity that joins the tragedy of the black and white farmers of South Carolina, who tried to defend their right to free and peaceful labour in a free land many decades ago, with the great anti-fascist fight of the peoples in the Second World War. He dedicated *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, a recent novel, to "those brave Americans who, today and yesterday, have accepted prison and even death—rather than betray the principles they believed in, the land they loved, or the people whose trust they bore." Thus, everywhere, consistently and invariably, the writer endeavours to disclose the connection between the individual fortunes, suffering, exploits and even the death of his fighter heroes and the great cause of freedom.

Fast achieves great depth of artistic generalization because he shows that his characters, despite the inimitable, distinctive features of their individual personalities, are part of the greater life of the people whose interests they come to represent and express. And it is an important feature of his realism that he strives to depict this process of the individual's growing unity with the struggle of the masses, his deepening comprehension and awareness of social interests which he at last comes to identify with his own.

In this sense Fast's work is the direct opposite of his forerunners', the exponents of critical realism in American literature.

The literature of critical realism generally depicted the relationship between the hero and his environment as a process in which unfavourable external circumstances exercise a destructive influence upon the hero, who, although he is fundamentally decent by nature, is gradually corrupted. In Fast's novels, on the contrary, the hero, fighting against circumstances and striving to change them, actively influences his environment; he himself changes in the process, gaining—not losing—in stature, and constantly moving forward. Nor is the hero's conflict with his environment depicted as a savage and single-handed combat, as was frequently the case in the novels of the critical realists of the past (Balzac's Rastignac arrogantly threatened to measure his strength with property-owning Paris, and Cowperwood, of Dreiser's *The Financier*, saw in the rapacity of a lobster devouring a squid a symbol of his future relations with men).

In Fast's works, and in those of his colleagues, the progressive writers of present-day America, the story of man's conflict with his environment unfolds differently. No matter how unfavourable the circumstances, how tragic the outcome, it is disclosed as a process of inner growth, of spiritual enrichment that increases as the multiform ties binding the hero with the people gain in strength and breadth. This leitmotiv rings out with great power in the concluding passages of one of Fast's best novels, *Freedom Road*: Gideon Jackson's last thought, when it would seem that the work of his whole life is dying with him, is not one of despair, but of pride in his people, the people who made him their leader and whom he defended honourably.

History and the Present Day

This is the keynote of the majority of the books Fast has written since the war. Nor does it make for monotony in subject-matter or character delineation. Far from it. The characters in Fast's novels and stories are widely dissimilar. There is Gideon Jackson, yesterday's plantation slave who becomes a statesman and a member of Congress; and there is Sidney Greenspan, an American Communist, who grew up in the slums of New York, went through the hard school of class struggle in America in the 1930's, who knew the battlefronts of Republican Spain, captivity and Franco's jails, and who later enlisted as a volunteer in the Second World War and lost his life in it; Jamie Stuart, the obscure artisan, volunteer soldier in the American War for Independence, a leader in the rising of the Pennsylvania Line who succeeded in the complicated task of organizing the rebels; and the legendary gladiator Spartacus, leader of a slave revolt that shook Rome to its foundations. There are the defenders of Peekskill, ordinary men and women with extraordinary courage, who stood up against murderous gangs of fascists; among the defenders was Howard Fast himself, and he draws a truthful and exact picture of his own part during those unforgettable days. And lastly, there is the modest college professor Silas Timberman, who develops before the reader's eyes from a bookish, rather naive scholar into a fighter, a true Citizen and Patriot.

Thus the artist selects widely varying forms in which to embody the typical process of the inner and social growth of a man who joins the people's struggle and, from a potential fighter, turns into a conscious participant in the onward march of history.

It is not the end result of this process alone that is important. Whatever the structure of the novel or story—whether it is a biographical narrative with an account of the hero's whole life, or whether all the action is compressed into a single day, as in *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*—Howard Fast endeavours to portray, either directly, or by looking backward, through the recollections of the characters, this process of inner growth, to show how a man becomes a hero, how he finds his place in the struggle and comes to understand the cause to which he has dedicated himself.

In Fast's novels, for the first time in the history of American literature, considerable attention is paid to the role of the masses in bringing about social changes. Whether the novel is about the slave revolt

in ancient Rome, the American War of Independence, the so-called Reconstruction following the Civil War, or present-day events, the author always discerns and discloses through factual material the creative and constructive energy latent in the masses, energy enabling them, at the first favourable opportunity, to take over social initiative and political power.

In *The Proud and the Free*, a novel about a rising of soldiers in the American army during the War for Independence, extraordinary power and feeling impregnate the descriptions of the rebels' avid desire for knowledge, of their initiative in organizing new forms of self-government and introducing new ways of life during their brief period of power. The rising was betrayed and suppressed. But in Fast's novel this flash of popular creative energy seems like a harbinger of the coming dawn of the future in which the emancipated people will take power for good and reorganize life in conformity with the laws of social freedom and justice.

The same idea is conveyed in *Freedom Road* in the vividly-drawn scenes of the first South Carolina Convention following the Civil War. The Carwell farmers' dream of a new and fair system in which the land belongs to the tillers is a naive and illusory one, and it can never come true in capitalist America. But Fast shows persistently and convincingly—and this is the important thing—how racial barriers and prejudices which only recently seemed insurmountable can be overcome in the fight for common interests, how ignorance, superstition and grasping selfishness can be defeated.

The realization that each generation of fighters for freedom makes its contribution to the people's historical advancement, leaving an indelible impress on the life of society, is reflected in the entire structure of Fast's works of fiction—in their composition, plot, subject-matter, character delineation. In this sense such widely different works as *The American*, *Spartacus*, *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* and *Silas Timberman* have something basic in common. In all of them the author makes it clear that his heroes have had tremendous, perhaps even incalculable, influence on the course and direction of social development. They themselves have been altered by social environment, certainly, but they have, in turn, left an impress on that environment, have shaped it and altered it so tangibly that after their departure from the historical scene the world will never again be what it was before they came into it.

In *Sacco and Vanzetti*, as in *The American* and in *Freedom Road*, Fast makes his reader feel that the death of the heroes is not the end, but the beginning, not just death, but the birth of the new. On the last pages of *Sacco and Vanzetti* he brings two of his characters, two world outlooks, into conflict. Both have participated in the fight to save Sacco and Vanzetti. Now, that it is all over, the professor of criminal law, who has been guided by the philosophy of bourgeois humanism in his efforts to restore trampled justice, finds himself at a dead end. The useless and unjust death of two innocent men has disheartened him. The Communist, with whom he is talking, sees farther into the future. Behind the two fallen heroes, he sees millions joining the fight. And the argument between the two enables Fast to convey to the reader vividly, without preachment, the book's affirmative and profoundly optimistic basic idea.

"Now they will die. . . . I know the men are guiltless, and yet they must die. My faith in human decency will die with them."

"Your faith dies easily," the Communist said.

"Does it? Is your faith stronger? Where is your faith, sir?"

"With the working people of America," the Communist answered."

"*Silas Timberman*"

This same belief in man's strength pervades Fast's latest novel, *Silas Timberman*, and it is strongest in the concluding scene when Silas Timberman, sentenced to imprisonment for perjury, makes his final speech in court. The influence of Gorky's *Mother*, of the scene in which Pavel Vlasov and his comrades become the accusers instead of the accused, is clearly discernible here.

The novel shows the development of Silas Timberman, a teacher of American literature in a Mid-Western college, a man who has been uninterested in politics, who has not even wished to think of politics, into a courageous and resolute public-spirited fighter. The trial is over. The court sentences him to three years' imprisonment. Against him were bribed witnesses and a predetermined verdict. The court-room is almost empty and, except for his wife and lawyer, only declared enemies can hear his voice. Yet his final speech is not the despairing outcry of an individual at bay—it rings out with the pride and dignity of a man who knows that his cause will surely triumph.

"I am not unimportant," he says to the Judge, 'I used to think that I was. But no man is unimportant, Your Honour. You can laugh at me later and send me to prison and tell your friends how easy it was to convict one rather simple school teacher; but that will not change what was done in this court-room or make it any less a burden for you and every other man in this city to bear. You are letting loose a horror that will destroy you as surely as you attempted to destroy me—with one difference. I am indestructible. That is not egotism. I am a humble man, perhaps too humble; but I am on the side of life, and you are on the side of death.'"

Silas Timberman, out of a job, publicly disgraced, flung into prison, his wife Myra, their children, the youngest of whom, six-year-old Brian, was very nearly blinded in a vigilante attack, have many hard trials ahead of them. Fast does not try to soften reality. He shows how hard and bitter it is for honest and courageous friends of peace and democracy in present-day America. At the same time, however, in this novel too, he depicts his heroes as the victors, not as the defeated. The future belongs to them. And, as the last lines of the book indicate, the separation between Silas and Myra is not an end but another beginning for them.

Fast's depiction of the positive hero in the process of acting on his environment, both in his fictional works and in his literary criticism, reveals him as an exponent of a new method of portraying life.

In the work of Fast, as of other contemporary progressive writers who follow the method of Socialist realism, the novel is regaining the heroic spirit and epic breadth which Ralph Fox called for in *The Novel and the People* twenty years ago.

The joy of learning to understand life, of changing it, the joy of

making history, of struggle, even an unequal one, constitute the rich emotional substance of Fast's novels.

And this striving to portray man's growth in the struggle with his social environment, to embrace reality with all its numerous and multi-form relationships and contradictions, in whose development all historical progress is rooted, has enabled Fast to achieve in his writing an integrity and lyrical quality which were lacking in the American realistic novel for a long time. The details of the hero's surroundings and of his relations with other people are woven into the fabric and are deeply relevant to the logic of the story. Fast, one might say, overcomes the cult of accident which characterized the naturalistic trends in American critical realism. In his best works the accidental is no longer accidental in the real sense of the word. Specific details are charged with deep meaning; manifested in them are the typical aspects of the people's life. In *Silas Timberman*, for instance, the dialogue, even when it concerns seemingly casual subjects, and the descriptions of interiors and landscapes have a special significance, for they give the reader insight into the change that is taking place in the hero's inner world. Nor is this achieved by turning realistic details into abstract symbols.

An example of the artistic effect Fast achieves is the gripping scene depicting the mass meeting of students in defence of Ike Amsterdam, a distinguished professor of astrophysics who has been suspended from the university because of his anti-war activities. This is Silas Timberman's first address outside the walls of a class-room; the passionate moving speech he makes comes from the depths of his being. Greatly agitated, not yet fully realizing where his fight against social injustice will lead him, Silas has a heightened perception of all the details around him. The faces of the students seem different. There is a disturbing and exciting quality about the autumn wind. Even the Civil-War monument on the university campus, an ordinary sight, one which Silas passes every day without noticing, now becomes a symbol of all the American people have had to suffer in defence of their freedom, of all they have yet to suffer. The monument, showing a bearded man of the people, each arm supporting a youthful soldier who has been wounded in the fight to free the Negro slaves and preserve the Union, seems to speak without words of the past revolutionary traditions of the American working people and to stress the contrast between their interests and those of the handful who, posing as "patriots," in reality defend only the interests of the imperialist clique. Thus, realistic details are charged with emotion and meaning, making any preaching on the author's part superfluous. Landscape descriptions also play an important part in the novel, revealing the characters' mood and creating the poetic atmosphere to which Ralph Fox attached so much importance in his creative programme for the revival of the epic spirit in realistic prose.

This impregnation of concrete detail with emotion is a characteristic feature of *Silas Timberman*. At the height of his conflict with the reactionary university authorities, Silas Timberman senses hostility in the ordinary, polite greetings of his superiors; even the furniture in the university president's office, the mahogany filing cabinets, the over-sized desks, and the over-stuffed chairs, lined up so arrogantly and contemptuously, impress him as sinister monsters, usurpers in the temple of knowledge.

What in the American critical realists of the past was often merely a static background, is now given an undercurrent of emotion, is drawn into the action and takes active part in it. Thanks to this synthesis of the lyrical and the epic, the novel's means of artistic expression are considerably enhanced and man's social being and his inner world are perceived as an integral whole.

The aesthetic searchings of Howard Fast, a gifted writer of bold and profound ideas, reveal that Socialist realism has begun to manifest itself with originality and vividness in the progressive literature of the United States, despite the difficult conditions under which it is developing in that country.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS

In this issue we carry reproductions of several works displayed at the 1955 U.S.S.R. Art Exhibition in Moscow.

Irina Shevandronova is one of the youngest artists represented at the exhibition. She was born in Moscow in 1928, graduated at the Surikov Art Institute in that city in 1953.

Eduard Kalnins, Merited Artist of the Latvian Republic, born in Latvia in 1904, and graduated at the Latvian Academy of Arts in 1932, is one of the most distinguished Soviet marine painters. His paintings have been displayed at many Latvian and U.S.S.R. art exhibitions.

Merited Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. Konstantin Finogenov, Stalin Prize winner, was born in 1902 in Stalingrad. He graduated at the Stalingrad School of Art in 1924 and then studied for several years at the Leningrad Academy of Arts and the Moscow Polygraphic Institute. Finogenov is best known for his drawings, particularly the series including *Stalin and the Great Patriotic War*, *Stalingrad Under Construction*, and *New China*.

In 1954 Finogenov visited India with a group of Soviet artists. The result of his trip was a series of sketches in oils, entitled *Through Friendly India*. Of this series we carry *A Bombay Dancer*.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALIAN PROSE WRITING

THE progress made recently in prose writing is one of the most interesting and significant aspects of the emergence of a progressive literature in Italy. Indeed, the present and the future of this new Italian literature depend in large measure on the advance of the narrative genres, and in particular the novel. This is a fact of which the progressive writers and critics of that country are fully aware.

Discussing the evolution of a new, democratic literature in Italy, Antonio Gramsci in notes written in the 'thirties and subsequently published in the collection *Literature and the Nation's Life* pointed out that it would be absurd to expect masterpieces like Manzoni's *The Betrothed* or Foscolo's *Sepulchres* to appear every year or even every ten years. Hence literary critics must not measure every new piece of writing with the same yardstick they might apply to masterpieces; they should support the healthy trends in the country's literary life as a whole—the realism and the popular quality that engender masterpieces.

Italian prose writers may not have created masterpieces recently, but it cannot be denied that they have produced a number of works which indicate that certain tendencies characteristic of a progressive literature in the making have become firmly established in that country.

The Resistance Movement and the War of Liberation laid the foundations for a revival of Italian prose, and today it has no small achievement to its credit. Witness the novels of Vasco Pratolini and Francesco Jovine, the short stories of Domenico Rea, the stories and reportage of Italo Calvino and Carlo Cassola. The march of events, however, is constantly confronting prose writers with new demands—a fact which is understandable if one considers, on the one hand, the prolonged crisis of Italian letters and, on the other, the rise of a mass movement that has no precedent in Italian history—the fight for peace which has embraced the broadest sections of the population, the growing unity of the working class, the maturing political consciousness of the toiling peasant, his fight for land and for democratic rights.

While confronting literature with major problems, the powerful democratic movement at the same time offers conditions for the development of realistic writing which Italy never had before. Keenly aware of this fact, progressive Italian critics focus attention on two cardinal problems of equally vital importance to progressive Italian letters: the need for realistic portrayal of character in all literary genres, and the development of the long novel.

Noteworthy is the treatment of these problems by Professor Carlo Salinari of Rome University in the weekly *Contemporaneo*, and the literary reviews of Gaetano Trombatore, Niccolo Gallo and other critics. A

number of works published to date, such as *A Chronicle of Poor Lovers*, by Pratolini, or the best short stories of Domenico Rea, display keen observation and a good knowledge of life, are written in vivid, simple language and—what is most important—testify to the authors' sympathies with the common people who are their heroes. However, since we are reviewing the development of prose writing as a whole, we are concerned less with the achievements of individual writers than with the new tendencies manifested in Italian letters in general.

Latterly an increasing number of writers have sought to depict the life of various sections of society—the factory workers, the peasants, the office workers. Mario Schettini's novel *Bastard Land* and Giuseppe Berto's *The Bandit*, for instance, depict the bitter lot of the Calabrian peasants, their hopes and aspirations, and their active struggle for their rights. Many works deal with unemployment.

The story *Charcoal Burners*, by Silvio Micheli, published in *Unita* last year, while giving a vivid picture of the rugged landscape of the mountains, treats also of the social conditions of the working folk and contains some subtle psychological portraits. This little story stands out as an example of a new trend in democratic literature, depicting the labour of the common man and, through it, social reality in deeper, more realistic colours. When Italian bourgeois prose writers have turned to the theme of labour, it has been to treat it mostly as something "quaint" and "picturesque" in stories of village life, or to derive from it amusing situations for humorous stories about office workers or petty civil servants. The work of the intellectual has been presented as the endeavours of a "superman" aspiring to genius.

The new democratic trends have manifested themselves most strikingly in the work of young writers brought to the fore by the Resistance and the War of Liberation, though they may be discerned also in the writings of some authors belonging to older generations. Giuseppe Raimondi, for instance, who for a long time was an adherent of the non-political and formalistic *rondismo* school has made an attempt in his latest novel *News from Emilia*, published last year, to give a true-to-life portrayal of the lot of the labouring folk in this part of Italy. He lays the emphasis on the civic consciousness of the people of this province and thereby breaks with the old rhetorical and exotic tradition that formerly predominated in literary works about Emilia and Romagna.

It is of interest to note that even in writings where the leading characters are aristocrats (as, for instance, in the latest stories by Leonida Repaci) a good deal of space is devoted to descriptions of the life and customs of the common people. Only a few writers, such as Patti and Soldati, continue to treat of the emotional tribulations of the degenerate, indolent rich.

Many of the literary works of recent years deal with the Resistance and the War of Liberation against the Nazi invaders. *Unita* reports that a prize offered by the women's magazine *Noi donne* was awarded to Silvia Maria Bonfanti for her novel *Hope* in which she depicts the Italian women's participation in the struggle from an entirely new angle. Progressive children's literature too has in recent years derived its subject-matter from the heroic struggles waged by the people and in particular the life of the guerrillas of the last years of the Second World War. The stories of Luisa Sturani, Renata Giorgi, Guido Petter and others will no

doubt exercise a beneficial influence on the youth by counteracting the corrupting effect of the traditional entertainment type of bourgeois fiction.

Most of the books about the Resistance Movement and the War of Liberation are in the reportage style—*cronache*—as it is termed by Italian critics, with strong elements of autobiographical reminiscences. The appearance of this genre played no small part in the regeneration of Italian literary prose inasmuch as it basically draws on actual events, but its inadequacy as a literary medium is already making itself felt. Their authors are more concerned with reporting facts (related either as reminiscences or with documentary fidelity) than with artistic generalizations of reality.

The progressive critics have unanimously praised three books published by Einaudi in 1954: Giampiero Carocci's *Officers' Camp*, Italo Calvino's *The War Breaks Out*, and Carlo Cassola's *Old Comrades*. Of the three, all of which are signal contributions to the *cronache* genre, the last-mentioned has been commended most highly by the progressive press.

In *Old Comrades* the autobiographical element has receded and artistic generalization has come to the fore. The author depicts a definite period in the history of the country and peoples his story with typical artisans, workers, peasants, and partisans. His narrative is about the life of a group of artisans and workers of Volterra bound together by ties of comradeship and a common will to fight for the interests of the working class and the entire nation, yet in this account of the group of "old comrades" from Volterra he seeks to reflect the history of the nation with all its social and political problems which were posed and solved in the period of the Resistance and the War of Liberation.

The story covers the span of time from the final years of fascist rule to the end of the Second World War. The depth of character portrayal, the complexity and diversity of the political and moral issues involved, and the treatment of the interrelation of the individual and his environment in Cassola's book make it more of a novel than a piece of documentary writing. His heroes consciously fight for the interests of the working people, and are closely linked with the working class, the most progressive force in present-day society, and its political struggle. The best passages in the book are those that show the heroes in action.

The author clearly defines his own approach to reality and seeks actively to influence it in depicting his positive heroes. One such hero is the Communist worker Gino Baldini, known to his comrades simply as Baba. Cassola has worked for years over this type which he obviously regards with particular affection. Baba first appeared soon after the War of Liberation in a story under the same title, which Cassola contributed to a magazine published in Florence, and since then been constantly elaborating and enriching this character. In his latest book Cassola rounds out the portrait of Baba. Not that Baba is the central figure in the book, which is the story of the group of "old comrades" and of each of its members. For that matter more prominence is given to Piero, the artisan, and the gradual awakening of his political consciousness. Nevertheless the ideological content of the book is most clearly expressed through Baba and his reactions to the events and the characters described.

Brought up in a working-class family, Baba fought in the Resistance movement and served time in a fascist forced-labour camp, where he acquired that clarity of thinking and firmness of conviction that was

to make him the natural political and spiritual leader of the newly-formed Communist nucleus of Volterra. A simple, unassuming man of great moral integrity, energy and self-control, Baba epitomizes the finest traits of the Italian working class. The working men respect his authority, and with patient perseverance he helps them to develop their political outlook.

This is most graphically illustrated in the case of Piero. His friend Arnaldo, driven to despair by the struggle for existence, commits suicide. Piero's father, an honest lumber worker, is injured at work and dies. The fate of his father and comrade, unemployment and fascist terror, open Piero's eyes and cause him to rebel against his lot. Piero does not want to die like his father, "a dumb beast of burden," but at first his rebellion is purely emotional: Piero dreams of sticking a knife in the back of the fascist bloodsucker Amilcare who drove Arnaldo to suicide. Baba helps him to adopt the path of organized struggle and to overcome his anarchistic, sectarian tendencies. Baba symbolizes the strength of the Party, its contact with the masses, and its staunch faith in the victory of the labouring masses.

Niccolo Gallo, the critic, speaking of Cassola's "obstinate faith in the truth," regards him as one of the "most conscientious writers" and notes that this author has taken the decisive step from documentary to real artistic prose.

A member of the Resistance in the past, Cassola today is to be found in the ranks of the working class fighting for the democratic rights of the Italian people. This gives him a deeper insight into reality. The problem of realism in Italian literature is inseparably linked with the writers' active participation in the day-to-day struggle of the progressive forces.

Writing in the 'thirties on the crisis of Italian bourgeois culture, which reached its lowest ebb under fascist rule, Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* laid particular emphasis on the decline of prose writing and its complete detachment from the life of the country and its people. Today the new trends in Italian literature that have latterly come to the fore, offer every indication that it is on the right road.

GREAT ANNIVERSARIES



FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

(On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his death)

FRIEDRICH Schiller (1759-1805), the great German poet and playwright, lived and worked in a period when Germany was divided into hundreds of tiny states and weighed down by feudal despotism, provincial isolationism and the narrow, self-centred mentality of the burghers.

Although there was no broad democratic movement in this disunited and economically retrograde country, there were progressive minds that expressed the people's aspirations for a better life. As Engels said, this shameful political and social age was at the same time the great age of German literature.

The people's hatred of oppression and their hopes for a brighter future were voiced in many works by the best writers of the *Sturm und Drang* period, but it was Schiller's writings that gave politically precise expression to the struggle of German youth against the abasement and dismemberment of the country and against a courtiers' culture that had no ties with the people.

It is noteworthy that the new revolutionary theatre movement which was coming to life in the last decade of the 18th century in France considered that one of Schiller's earlier works, *The Robbers*, was among the few new plays that could replace the old plays in its repertoire. French audiences accepted the denunciations of Karl Moor as denunciations of

the French feudal regime that had been swept away by their own Revolution. Schiller's passion was in harmony with the patriotism that had fired the French people in their fight for liberty. And so *The Robbers* struck an international note.

The importance of Schiller's earlier plays is that in them the author portrayed the most significant conflicts of his day. *Intrigue and Love*, for example, draws a sharp contrast between two worlds, the aristocracy and the "Third Estate." The lawless and corrupt practices of high functionaries, the profligacy and parasitism of the nobility, the plight of a people without rights expressively sum up the political and social system of the little German dukedom which is the setting of *Intrigue and Love*.

Besides denouncing evil, the play sets a high standard of humanist ideals. It shows the great moral superiority of the humble heroine, Luise Miller, the daughter of a musician, over the titled nonentities.

It was to the credit of the progressive writers of this period that they devoted much attention to national themes. Goethe in his younger days, evaluating German literature of the preceding period, saw as its main shortcoming the lack of national content. This later stress on national themes contributed greatly to the establishing of realistic principles in German literature.

Schiller based his literary treatment of historically important questions on the concrete happenings of his day, and that was one of the major victories of this new literary epoch in Germany. Even the language he used in his works was an example of this. Together with the exalted words of his heroes Ferdinand and Karl Moor there were many passages of rough, colloquial speech. Vulgarisms and scraps of dialect in some scenes, with their reminder of everyday life without any embellishments, strengthened the reality of all that was happening on the stage.

In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel, who was far from sympathizing with the ideals of the *Sturm und Drang* writers, had to admit the value of the early writings of Goethe and Schiller. "In the field of vivid, natural description and in individual characterization," he wrote, "they searched for a richer content and important conflicts that commanded deep interest." Hegel associated that aspect of their work with the general process of creating a national literature.

Even in his early period Schiller tried to formulate his protest against the conditions in his country; but 18th-century Germany had no wide democratic movement and, because there were no worthy living prototypes of his Karl Moor, Schiller could not add to his portrait those vivid brush-strokes that would have made his hero a typical hero of his day. Thus Karl Moor became a spokesman for Schiller's own ideas, a spokesman who epitomized with tremendous force the progressive ideas of the period. Although heroes of this type uttered noble, courageous sentiments, the audience could not regard them as living examples whom they could emulate in life.

The political force of Schiller's early plays is closely connected with the deep faith that gave the hero's voice its power to ring out, to rally and to attack, to "erupt like lava from the depth of a young and vigorous soul," as Belinsky described it. The secret of Schiller's success was that this "lava" of declamation was stronger than the action on the stage, which showed that the hero was in the end defeated.

The conflict in the drama thus acquired a complicated and a contradictory character: the hero's words had a stronger note of revolutionary challenge and of faith in the victory of humanist ideals than had his actions. The monologues of Karl Moor proclaimed a programme of bourgeois revolution: the fate of the hero at the final curtain showed that that programme could not be carried out in the Germany of that time.

In these conditions it was inevitable that the world-outlook of the *Sturm und Drang* writers came to a dead-end, and before *The Robbers* had found its new public in revolutionary France, its author had abandoned the rebellious ideas of his youth.

Schiller never reconciled himself to the injustices and miseries of the Germany of his day, but his politically backward surroundings could give him no support for the ideals of his early heroes. He could not pass from thoughts of individual revolt to thoughts of national revolution, and so in the end he came to reject the idea of revolt in general.

The years when the French people were destroying the centuries-old foundations of feudalism brought Schiller no understanding of the historical, universal meaning of the great happenings on the other side of the Rhine. It was during those years that he tried to persuade his fellow-countrymen that "to find a practical solution to a political problem one should follow the aesthetic path; for it is only by way of beauty that one can reach freedom." That was the period in which he was trying to work out a theory of "aesthetical education."

Schiller made the same mistake as the many German ideologists who, when they failed to find a workable solution of the more troublesome problems of the day, tried to escape from unpleasant reality into an "ideal" world. Goethe, it is worth noting, went farther than merely rejecting his friend's aesthetical ideas: he repeatedly deplored the baneful influence that Kant's idealistic aesthetics had on Schiller's creative work. "It was sad," Goethe lamented to Eckermann, "to see how so highly gifted a man tormented himself with philosophical disquisitions which could in no way profit him."

Schiller did, indeed, torment himself trying to find answers to many questions which reality thrust before him. Although his aesthetical theories were false, the questions he raised in them were prompted by life itself, and for that reason there are many notable pages in his works on aesthetics. He could not fail to notice certain aspects of reality which were representative of the then nascent bourgeois society.

He noticed, for example, with sorrow how Man was being turned into a pitiful appendage to the Machine:

"Chained continually to one tiny fraction of a whole, a man becomes himself a fraction; hearing continually the monotonous noise of a wheel that he has put in motion, he cannot develop the harmony of his being and, instead of expressing the human-ness of his nature, he becomes only a reflection of his occupation or his science."

The plays that Schiller wrote in the last years of the 18th century and the first years of the 19th reflected historical changes that were taking place in the world at large:

*The Century rends itself in storm away,
And, red with slaughter, dawns on earth the New,*

wrote Schiller in his poem *The Commencement of the New Century* (1800). The revolutionary storm that had swept over France heralded the coming of this new age. The political conceptions of the absolutist ideologists who proclaimed that God's will was the supreme law had been shattered; even the Encyclopaedist doctrine that "opinions rule the world" had been re-examined.

Although Schiller reached false conclusions at times, his attention was always focussed on "great events" and he was always inspired by "high aims." That was amply evidenced in his later plays, the Wallenstein trilogy: *Mary Stuart*, *The Maid of Orleans* and *William Tell*.

There is however little trace of the rebellious spirit of *The Robbers* in Schiller's later plays; but in the best of them the narrow individualism of the *Sturm und Drang* movement is overcome; the importance of the separate individual loses its former dominating force. In *Wallenstein's Camp* Schiller depicts mass scenes for the first time, scenes which reveal the historic quality of the age; in *William Tell* the people act as a positive force and become in fact the main hero of the conflict in the drama.

Although his later plays do not have a German setting, they deal with the most important questions of national development. One of the main questions was national unity, and it is significant that in *William Tell* it was the peoples' unity, born in struggle, that gave the promise of victory over tyranny.

The dying baron Attinghausen learns with surprise that the peasants had organized themselves to fight for freedom and unity:

*And have the peasantry dared such a deed
On their own charge, without the nobles' aid—
Relied so much on their own proper strength?
Nay then, indeed, they want our help no more;
We may go down to death cheer'd by the thought,
That after us the majesty of man
Will live, and be maintain'd by other hands.*

Recognition of the fact that historical progress would be affected by "other hands" brought Schiller near to the idea of the necessity for national unity.

New problems confronting dramatists determined the direction of Schiller's creative processes. The clash of opposing tendencies had given rise to a new literary method. Life itself had destroyed the metaphysical scheme of idealistic aesthetics. From out of the maze of romanticism of *The Maid of Orleans* Schiller made his way to realism. In *Mary Stuart* and, even more, in *William Tell*, he came near to a dialectic treatment of the impact of surroundings on his characters; he showed both the growth and the many-sidedness of his images. The fire in Schiller never died down, but now his hero became something more than a "mouthpiece for the spirit of his time"; he acquired the typical characteristics of the people of his time.

Progressives in Germany and throughout the world always recognized in Schiller an impassioned fighter for the liberation of humanity and a courageous champion of progress. His optimistic humanism inspired generations of fighters for a better future.

The welcome accorded Schiller's works in Russia is significant. The first Russian translations of his plays and poems actually appeared during his lifetime. By the end of the 19th century all his literary works had been translated. Among the translators were outstanding Russian poets like Derzhavin, Zhukovsky, Lermontov, and, later, Fet, Mei, Tyutchev and Mikhailov. Zhukovsky especially did much to popularize Schiller in Russia. Many of his translations remain unsurpassed today.

Russian progressive thinkers held Schiller in high regard. In 1840 Belinsky wrote: "Long live the great Schiller, the noble champion of humanity, the bright star of salvation, the emancipator of society from the bloody superstitions of evil tradition!" He hailed Schiller as a "poet of humanitarianism" who "hated religious and national fanaticism, superstition, the scourge and the stake and all that made man the enemy of man." He repeatedly stressed that Schiller's works had a national content by means of which the writer was able to deal with problems of universal, historical importance.

Progressive writers in Russia emphasized that Schiller's words lost none of their force with the passage of time and that his images and ideas played an active role in real life. The fire of his ever-youthful words appealed strongly to the fighting spirit of writers who were active in the Russian liberation movement. Herzen in his memoirs spoke in the warmest terms of Schiller and declared that "those who lose the taste for Schiller are either old or pedantic, either dried-up or beyond hope."

In a review of a new edition of Schiller, Chernyshevsky said that thanks to the translations this German poet had become "a participant in our mental progress."

The October Revolution made Schiller's works part of the people's heritage. During the Civil War, Schiller's early plays had a great success. Their fighting spirit struck an answering chord in the hearts of revolutionary audiences. Testimony to Schiller's wide appeal is to be found in several outstanding works dealing with the first years of Soviet power, notably in Alexei Tolstoy's famous trilogy *Ordeal*.

Konstantin Fedin's *No Ordinary Summer* tells how cavalymen moving up to the front were strengthened in their determination for victory by works like *Intrigue and Love*.

"No, Luise's sufferings were not in vain," he wrote. "She was not alone in her contempt for brute force, in her proud disdain for those in power, nor even in her grief and loneliness. The soldiers of the Revolution, seeking truth in all aspects of life, demanded truth from the theatre as well. They found an element of this truth in the defenceless girl...."

The wide appeal of Schiller in those years of revolutionary war testified again and again to the undying significance of the literary images he created.

The voice of Schiller reverberates now as it reverberated a century and a half ago. His appeal that the millions should join in a brotherly embrace sounds as if he were alive today and were giving expression to the desire of every lover of peace and progress throughout the world.

SERGEI TURAYEV

MISCELLANY

PAVEL BOGACHEV

Director of the State Lenin Library

ROMAIN ROLLAND'S "WARTIME DIARY"

IN JANUARY 1935 Romain Rolland sent to the Lenin Library of the U.S.S.R., through the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, five sealed packages containing the authorized copy of his *War-time Diary (1914-1919)*. Similar copies were sent by the great French writer to the libraries of Harvard University and of the Nobel Institute in Sweden. The original manuscript had been deposited in 1929 with the Public Library of Basel University, Switzerland.

Together with the sealed packages, the Lenin Library received the following letter from Rolland, dated November 25, 1934, setting forth his wishes and intentions in turning his Diary over to the Lenin Library.

Villeneuve (Vaud) Suisse,
Villa Olga,
November 25, 1934

To the Director of the Lenin Library in Moscow,

Dear Comrade,

You have no doubt been informed of my intention to deposit with the Lenin Library in Moscow one of the copies I have had made of my *War-time Diary (1914-1919)*. This Diary consists of *twenty-nine notebooks in all*. Comrade Litvinov has undertaken to deliver to you the copies of the *first fifteen notebooks in five sealed packages* which I am handing him today. I trust that the Lenin Library will agree to accept them in its safe keeping on the conditions which I take the liberty of enumerating below:

I. The original manuscript of the *War-time Diary* in twenty-nine notebooks, has been deposited with the *Public Library of Basel University (Öeffentliche Bibliothek der Universität in Basel)*.

II. Three copies of this Diary, revised and corrected by me, have been or will be transmitted to the following three libraries:

- a) the Lenin Library in Moscow;
- b) the Library of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.;
- c) the Library of the Nobel Institute in Stockholm.

III. The four above-mentioned libraries (Basel, Moscow, Harvard and the Nobel Institute) undertake to *preserve unopened* the sealed packages containing the notebooks and copies of the Diary, which will be committed to their care, *until January 1, 1955 (nineteen fifty-five)*. On that day they are authorized to open the sealed packages and communicate their contents to scholars, who might be able to make use of them for their historical or literary work. The author reserves the exclusive right to use this Diary prior to January 1, 1955, should he so desire.

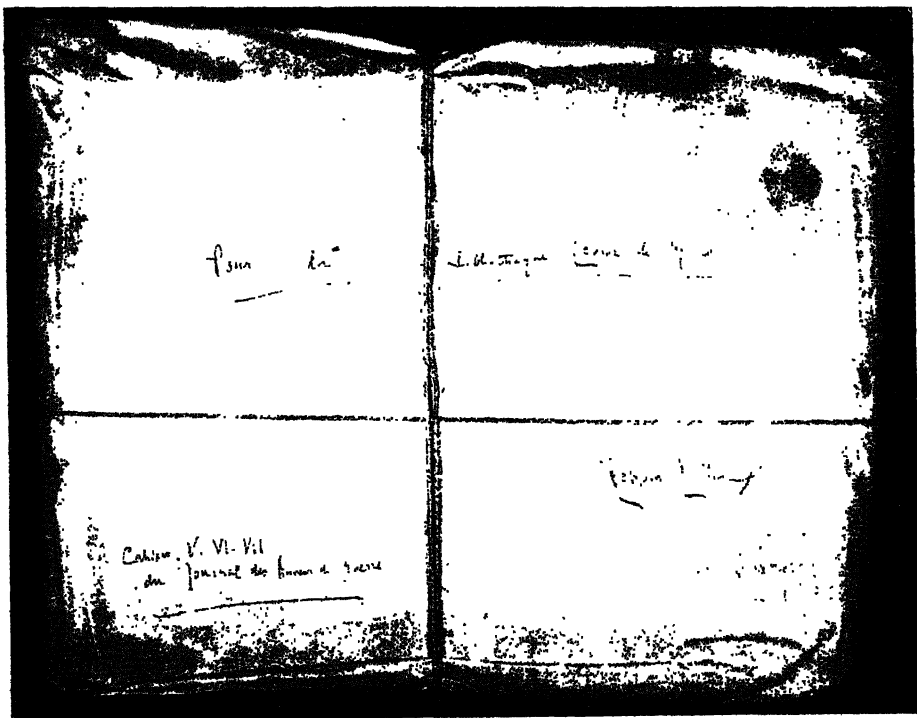
IV. On the First of January 1955:

a) the full right of publication in the languages of the U.S.S.R. of the copies of the Diary committed to the safe keeping of the Lenin Library in Moscow will be duly transferred to that library;

b) the full right to publish the Diary in the French and German languages will be duly transferred to the Public Library of Basel University;

c) the full right to publish in the English language the copies of the Diary which will be deposited with the Library of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, will be duly transferred to that library;

d) the full right to publish the Diary in the Scandinavian languages will be duly transferred to the Library of the Nobel Institute in Stockholm;



Package containing notebooks 5, 6 and 7 of "Wartime Diary"

e) The Diary may be translated into other languages (Italian, Spanish, Czech, Polish, etc.) with the permission of the Public Library of Basel University.

V. In the event that by January First, 1965 (nineteen hundred and sixty-five), i.e., ten years after the said packages containing the manuscripts and copies are opened, the above-mentioned libraries have not exercised their right to publish the said Diary, they shall forfeit this right and the Diary shall become public property. The manuscript and copies shall remain in the safe keeping of the libraries to whose care they have been committed.

VI. It is desirable (but not obligatory) that some understanding be reached between the four libraries aforementioned with a view to simultaneous publication of the first edition of the Diary, each library in the language or languages stipulated in Article 4.

VII. The author has retained a copy of his Diary of the years 1914-1919. He reserves the right, which shall be transferred after his death to his wife, Madame Marie Rolland, and to his sister, Madeleine Madeleine Rolland, to publish a volume of selections from the Diary, with all copyrights reserved.

I shall be much obliged if you will acknowledge receipt of the first fifteen notebooks in the five packages which I am sending you today through Comrade Litvinov. It remains for me to dispatch to you the copies of the last fourteen notebooks. I expect to be able to do this within the coming year.

With cordial greetings and warm sympathy, I remain, dear Comrade Director of the Lenin Library,

Romain Rolland.

N.B. The five packages I am sending you are encased in double wrappers. You may open the outer wrapping (of white paper) which is tied with a string. Inside you will find an inside parcel (wrapped in brown paper and sealed) on which I have written the date on which I wish these packets to be opened. Inside the outer wrapping you will find a signed copy of the agreement in which I have set forth the conditions of preserving and opening the manuscripts in the form cited in the present letter. R.R.

As the letter indicated, each of the five parcels was enclosed in a double wrapper. The outer wrapper of each parcel was addressed thus: "For the Lenin Library in Moscow, Romain Rolland."

The inside brown paper wrapper also carried a written inscription. Here, for example, is the inscription on the first package:

"*Wartime Diary* (authorized copy)

"July 31, 1914—May 1915

"Notebooks 1, 2, 3

"This package must remain sealed in the *Lenin Library in Moscow* until the First of January nineteen fifty-five (January 1, 1955), when the seals may be broken and the contents made public."

Each package was sealed five times with Romain Rolland's personal seal.

On December 10, 1934, Rolland wrote to the Director of the Lenin Library in Moscow asking whether the Library had received the five sealed

packages containing copies of the first fifteen notebooks of his *War-time Diary*.

At the end of his letter Rolland wrote that he would send additionally the remaining 14 notebooks of the Diary and once again mentioned the date on which these documents were to be opened.

"The copies of my Diary," wrote Rolland, "which I have revised and corrected, and to which will soon be added copies of the next fourteen notebooks of the said Diary, are to *remain unopened until January first, nineteen fifty-five*. From that moment the Lenin Library shall have the right not only to make these copies public, but also to publish them in the languages of the U.S.S.R. and reserve all rights to their publication."

The great French writer was duly notified of the receipt by the Lenin Library of the five sealed packages and the acceptance of the conditions on which he wished the Diary to be preserved. In reply, Rolland wrote on January 15, 1935, thanking the Lenin Library for accepting the sealed packages of his wartime Diary on the terms he had stipulated.

"The matter is now settled to our mutual satisfaction," he wrote. "And in a few months I shall have the pleasure of sending you a copy of the remaining notebooks which supplement the series of this *War-time Diary*."

On May 25, 1935, the author handed a Soviet delegation attending a conference in Geneva at the time, five sealed packages containing the second half of his Diary, with the request that they be turned over to the Lenin Library in Moscow, where they were duly delivered.

The ten sealed packages, delivered in 1935 to the Lenin Library through the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, remained in the Manuscripts Department of the library for twenty years.

During the late war the manuscripts were evacuated from Moscow to the interior of the country together with other valuable library property. When the war ended, they were brought back to Moscow, where they were preserved unopened, in accordance with Rolland's wishes, pending the date set by the author.

On January 1, 1955, at midday, Moscow time, the ten packages were opened by a commission presided over by Tatyana Zuyeva, Minister of Culture of the R.S.F.S.R., and including Fyodor Khrustov, Deputy Minister of Culture of the U.S.S.R., P. M. Bogachev, Director of the Lenin Library of the U.S.S.R., representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., the Ministry of Culture of the R.S.F.S.R., the Union of Soviet Writers, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the staff of the Lenin Library and the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS).

The ten packages bearing the personal seal of Romain Rolland and instructions in his own hand as to the date on which the seals were to be broken, contained authorized copies of 29 notebooks of the *War-time Diary* of Romain Rolland. Inside each package was a list of the contents signed by Rolland. The contents were as follows:

First package: notebooks 1, 2 and 3, totalling 225 pages, covering the period from July 31 to the end of December 1914. This package contained a preface to the Diary signed by Romain Rolland;

Second package: notebooks 4, 5, 6 and 7, totalling 248 pages, covering the period between December 26, 1914 to the end of May 1915;

Third package: notebooks 8, 9 and 10, totalling 187 pages, covering the period from the latter part of May to September 21, 1915;

Fourth package: notebooks 11, 12 and 13, totalling 150 pages, covering the period from September 28, 1915 to January 9, 1916;

Fifth package: notebooks 14 and 15, totalling 228 pages, covering the period from January to May 1916;

Sixth package: notebooks 16, 17 and 18, totalling 431 pages, covering the period from May to December 1916;

Seventh package: notebooks 19 and 20, totalling 281 pages, covering the period from January to May 1917;

Eighth package: notebooks 21, 22 and 23, totalling 339 pages, covering the period up to the winter of 1917-1918;

Ninth package: notebooks 24 and 25, totalling 253 pages, covering the spring and summer of 1918;

Tenth package: notebooks 26, 27, 28 and 29, totalling 304 pages, covering the autumn and winter of 1918, and May 1919;

The number of pages in all the 29 notebooks of the Diary, including several additional unnumbered pages, totals 2,650.

The Diary is prefaced by the following introduction:

"I should like to outline briefly the origin and structure of this collection of notes and documents about the war.

"In the first few weeks (August 1914), this Diary was merely a dialogue with myself, a tragic examination of my conscience provoked by the catastrophe. But from the very first days, I copied into the Diary, because of their beauty as human documents, some of the letters I had received, and also certain curious manifestations of the national spirit as evidence of a collective psychosis.

"Very soon the situation defined itself. I was alone, faced with a world that had gone mad with hatred and war frenzy. The sudden outburst of indignation at the position I had taken, and the less numerous, yet fervent and loyal counter-thrusts on the part of those who defended that position, made me, willynilly, the incarnation of the true cause of Europe, standing 'above the mêlée'—the sacrilegious mêlée of nations. The grandeur of that cause whose feeble exponent I was, made it incumbent upon me to chronicle the day-to-day march of history, the ordeals through which the world was passing. My privileged position in Switzerland, betwixt the warring nations, my friendship with the best minds of these nations, furnished me with documents of extraordinary value, gave me an insight into that stirring drama of the conscience that was rending so many human souls. In recording this, I was recording the *History of the European Soul in the War of the Nations*.

"I have made no attempt to set down my notes in any order other than that in which the impressions and facts recorded actually occurred. No preconceived idea has been allowed to distort the narrative. I have striven to preserve for the future the impression of a natural sequence of ideas and events. I have not been afraid to dwell at length on what concerned me personally. By the will of destiny my own cause coincided for a time with the great cause that lay trampled in the dust. I have recorded alike the insults as well as the praise that were addressed to me, and through me, to that cause. I affirm that I look upon my own personality in this Diary as something quite apart from myself, as indeed someone from whom I feel as remote as I shall be within a few years' time, when

the abyss of death shall separate me from my name for ever. Where will it be then, the name of Romain Rolland? Buried with his ashes, or eternally alive in the cause he once served? It is the history of that cause that I have written. It is necessary to bring to the knowledge of posterity the things that I, and a very few others, witnessed: the anguished strife of the souls of the West, their suffering, their doubts, their hopes, the whole tragedy of the European Spirit, buried alive by the war—that stoic little band of the faithful and persecuted who went on believing in the unity of crucified Europe and by their faith, resuscitated her.

Romain Rolland.

Sierra. Thursday, November 23, 1916."

The Diary begins with the entry dated July 31, 1914 made on the day the First World War was declared.

"3.30 a.m. Telegram of the Federal Council displayed at Vevey railway station announced: General mobilization in Russia and a state of war declared in Germany.

"This has been one of the loveliest days of the year, a glorious evening, the mountains float in a translucent bluish haze; a full moon pours a flood of gold over the lake from the Savoy side between Bouveret and St. Gingolph all the way to Vevey. The air is delicious, the scent of wistaria perfumes the night, and the stars shine with such a pure brilliance! It is in the midst of this divine calm, this tender loveliness, that the peoples of Europe are commencing the great massacre."

From day to day Rolland set down his thoughts, his attitude to the war and, mainly, as the author himself declared, "the manifestation of universal madness and hatred engendered by the war, the echoes that reached me day in and day out from all corners of the globe."

Rolland had kept a diary from his youth, but its contents changed radically through the course of his life. His early diaries were of an intimate, personal nature, but as time went on, social problems began to take precedence over subjective reactions.

"During the years of war in particular," writes Rolland, "I was overwhelmed by such a flood of documents and facts, both written and oral, that I deemed it my duty to efface myself and reproduce them." Elsewhere he declared that the value of the Diary consists in its wealth of documentary material reflecting the frenzied atmosphere of the war years.

Romain Rolland spent the entire period of the First World War in Switzerland, returning to France only in 1919.

Stefan Zweig, in his biography of Rolland tells us how the great French writer treasured his Diary. "On leaving Switzerland," Zweig tells us, "he would not risk having this precious intimate record of his life with him on crossing the frontier, where the customs officials had the right to pry into his most secret emotions. He has shown a page here and there to some of his friends, but the Diary as a whole is intended for some later date when the tragedy of our time might be subjected to a purer and more dispassionate gaze."

Rolland dwells in his Diary on a great many problems that agitated the minds of the progressive intellectuals of Europe in his time.

He bitterly condemned the First World War and the policy of the ruling classes which had plunged the peoples into a blood-bath.

"This European war," he wrote on August 3-4, 1914, "is the greatest disaster the world has seen for many a century—it has shattered our most cherished dream of the brotherhood of Man."

Bitter was his wrath on reading in the newspaper of the slaughter of civilians, and he relentlessly exposed the hypocrisy of bourgeois statesmen who played on the patriotic sentiments of the people.

On reading Lloyd George's speech in the latter part of 1916 in which the British premier maintained that the peoples of France and Italy were willingly going to war, Rolland wrote in his Diary: "What fearful blood-thirsty irony on the part of this contemptible man who knows well that the peoples of whom he speaks, the men who are being forcibly drafted into the army under threat of their own machine guns, were never more slaves than they are today, slaves comparable only to gladiators in the arena!" (Notebook 18.)

From the first days of the war, he wrathfully condemned the behaviour of the social-traitors who unhesitatingly gave their support to the war.

"Of what value are principles that are discarded when put to the very first test?" he asks in one of his entries.

In 1917 Rolland came to the conclusion that the war was being fostered and spread by the American imperialists, who, prompted by their greed for super-profits, were forcing the neutral nations to join the hostilities.

"I now have the impression," he wrote, "that America is behind it all. She holds the gold and the grain in her hands. Europe is forced to fight or die of starvation. Before long the neutral powers will be compelled to choose between joining the Allied armies or tightening their belts."

Rolland considered that the position of the French parliament was also the result of crude pressure from America and Britain. "I can find no other explanation," he writes, "for the behaviour of the French parliament, which after several attempts to rebel, has voted almost unanimously in favour of the government and for war to the finish, unless it be this hidden but menacing pressure. Of course France, devastated by war and up to her ears in debt, will perish from dire poverty if Britain and America withdraw their financial support. But she will have paid for that aid with her life's blood."

Rolland repeatedly issued urgent and impassioned appeals for peace, and he firmly believed that it was within the power of the peoples to stop the war.

On November 11, 1918, when the Armistice was declared, he made this entry in his Diary: "At least this is a pause in the extermination of the nations, however great the price that had to be paid for it. But let there first be peace. Later you, nations, will be able to speak to each other. And when you do, I will not give a *sou* for the hides of your rulers."

He sincerely welcomed the establishment of Soviets in Russia; he considered this the true people's democracy.

"It is a question of making way for genuine democracies, for true people's democracies, and not those of the exploiters whatever political labels they might bear," he wrote in his Diary in 1917.

"Let Europe work on the creation of new organizations like the Russian Soviets, the kernel of an International of the peoples—and not on

revising our obsolete political forms which have proved *utterly* useless or harmful."

Rolland regarded the Russian Socialist Revolution with sympathy and admiration. On reading the letter which Lenin addressed to the Swiss workers on his departure from Switzerland in 1917, and which ended with the words: "Long live the proletarian revolution that is beginning in Europe!" Rolland wrote in his diary: "Truly Lenin's words are the first call to arms of the world Revolution which we can feel brewing among humanity worn out by the fever of war. The hour has struck. The Revolution has begun."

On more than one occasion during the summer of 1917 Rolland came out in defence of Lenin and his followers. He declared that the Kerensky government was serving the Anglo-American imperialists and that the Russian people did not support that government.

"At the present time, the revolutionary people," he wrote in his Diary, "hate the social-patriotic bourgeoisie who have just shot them down in cold blood far more than they do tsarism."

Rolland appealed for international solidarity with the young Soviet Republic, he showed that the French and German bourgeoisie were in league against Bolshevism, and he took up the cudgels on behalf of Soviet Russia.

Rolland held that the victory of the Russian Revolution was vital to the future of Europe. He believed that Socialism would be victorious. He wrote in his chronicle of events at the turn of the century: "Europe will either be Socialist within a hundred years or it will cease to exist."

Rolland attached the greatest importance to the publication of his *Wartime Diary*. He writes in one of the documents attached to the original manuscript:

"Foreseeing the possibility of the loss or destruction of the manuscript in view of the catastrophic situation in Europe, and wishing to ensure the preservation of this historical testimony, the author has committed three copies of his Diary to three different libraries."

Exercising his right to publish part of the Diary, Rolland sent several excerpts from the manuscript to the Soviet Union in 1935-37 for publication in the periodical press of the U.S.S.R. Fragments appeared during this period in the magazines *Oktyabr*, *International Literature*, *Sovetskaya Muzika*, in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and several other publications.

In 1950, six years after Rolland's death, his wife published excerpts from the manuscript, and in 1952 a more complete edition was put out in the French language by the publisher Albin Michel. This latter edition, however, has numerous, and doubtless, important omissions, which it will be possible to ascertain after comparison with the authorized copy of the manuscript made available on January 1, 1955.

The Lenin Library possesses 169 works by Rolland published in the languages of the Soviet peoples, as well as several of his books which have been published in other countries.

Soviet readers are looking forward with great interest to the publication of his *Wartime Diary*. Directed against war, against imperialism, it will serve the labouring masses of all lands as a powerful weapon in the fight for world peace.



A sculptured portrait by V. Mukhina



Mukhina Exhibition

A posthumous exhibition of the works of the sculptress Vera Mukhina was held at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Arts. Models of well-known works exhibited included *The Worker and the Collective-Farm Girl*, the Maxim Gorky monument at the town of Gorky, and the statue of Chaikovsky in Moscow. Sketches and models exhibited enabled the public to study the process of the artist's creative work. Many of the 550 exhibits were being shown for the first time: these included the model for *Peace* intended for the Stalingrad planetarium, a bust of Dovzhenko, the film director, work done as a student, drawings and designs for theatre costumes and scenery. One room was devoted to works executed in glass and porcelain and to textile designs.

Many of the works exhibited will go to form a permanent collection for the Mukhina Museum that is to be opened in Moscow.

New Literary Magazines

It has been decided to launch in 1955 three new literary monthlies—*Yunost* (Youth), *Neva* and *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Writing). The magazine *Druzhba Narodov* (Friendship of the Peoples) is henceforth being published monthly instead of two-monthly.

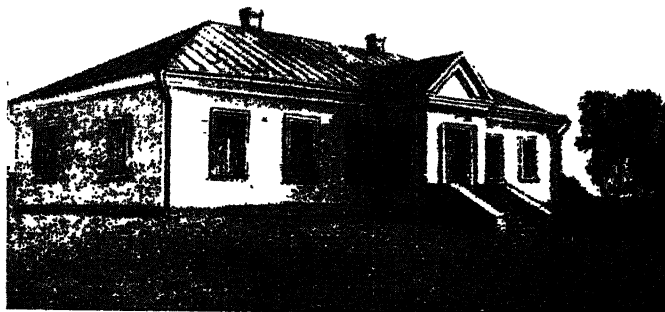
Academician A. Krylov by V. Mukhina

New Soviet Operas

Work is in progress both at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and at the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad on Dmitri Kabalevsky's new opera *Nikita Vershinin*, with a libretto based on Vsevolod Ivanov's play *Armoured Train 14-69*.

I. Dzerzhinsky is completing the score of his new opera *Storm*, based on Ostrovsky's play of that name. This too is intended for the Bolshoi Theatre. Tikhon Khrennikov is working on an opera based on Gorky's novel *Mother*.

Adam Mickiewicz Honoured



In the Byelorussian town of Novogrudok a museum has been made of the house where the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz once lived. Much material has been collected for the purpose, including portraits of the poet's father, mother and

brothers and Mickiewicz's birth certificate. Visitors to the museum can see a photograph of the rock in the forest around which Mickiewicz and his friends used to meet. Poland sent over 500 items as a gift to the museum.

Chinese Handicrafts

The Ministry of Culture of the U.S.S.R., the Ministry of Culture of the Chinese People's Republic and the Central Society for Chinese-Soviet Friendship jointly sponsored an exhibition in Moscow of Chinese handicrafts. More than two thousand objects, representing work by the people of many provinces of China, were exhibited. The porcelain and ceramics, including vases, sculpture and tableware, were distinguished by the simplicity and suavity of their forms and the brilliance of their colours. Visitors also had an opportunity of seeing examples of the ancient art of lacquer work, revived by craftsmen in Peking, Fukien, Szechwan and elsewhere.

On exhibition were examples of painted black lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay, and of carved red lacquer. One highly interesting section was devoted to stone, ivory and wood carving. This included jade sculptures, intricately carved boxes and vases, chalcedony and crystal vessels, and delicate filigree work in ivory. Ingenious wicker-work was also exhibited, including transparent curtains of bamboo fibre decorated with vivid designs, attractive fans, toys, hats, bags and shoes.

The textiles section included many examples of hand-made lace, embroidery, brightly-coloured silk panels and umbrellas.

New Krylov Discoveries

The Leningrad scholar A. Mogilyansky has succeeded in deciphering three thousand lines of the manuscripts of the Russian writer of fables Ivan Krylov, whose handwriting presented Soviet research workers with extraordinary difficulties. Mogilyansky has found several fables written in the 1820's and 1830's, whose existence was hitherto unknown to

students of literature. They include the following titles: *The Merchant and the Mice*, *The Candle and the Candle-End*, *The Two Cabbies*. The original versions of many well-known fables distorted by the censor have also been discovered. The deciphered texts are to be included in the complete standard edition of Krylov's fables.

350th Anniversary of Publication of "Don Quixote"



**Monument to Kosta
Khetagurov**

At Orjonikidze, the capital of North Ossetia in the Northern Caucasus, a monument has been unveiled to the founder of Ossetian literature, the poet Kosta Khetagurov (1859-1906). The monument, situated on the left bank of the River Terek, is the work of sculptor S. Tavasiev and architect I. Gainutdinov, both Ossetians.

To commemorate the 350th anniversary of the publication of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the Lenin Library in Moscow held an exhibition of more than one hundred different editions of the novel in various languages together with a large collection of illustrations. The books on view included an edition published in 1605 in Valencia, a Brussels edition of 1616, both of which appeared during Cervantes' lifetime; and the first complete edition of *Don Quixote* (in two volumes) published in 1617 in Barcelona. Editions illustrated by Coypel, Chodowiecki, Johannot, Gustave Doré and others were included in the exhibition, while separate etchings by the 18th-century artist Coypel and reproductions of the works of Fragonard, Goya, Delacroix and Daumier were on view. The exhibition contained the favourite books of Cervantes' hero *Poema del Cid*, the romance of chivalry *Amadis de Gaula*—in 21 miniature volumes—and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. They were exhibited in 16th-century editions in the Spanish, French and Italian language respectively. Russian editions of *Don Quixote* began with the St. Petersburg editions of 1769 and 1791. V. A. Zhukovsky's translations (1803-1806) were also on show. In Soviet times *Don Quixote* has been published in 50 editions and in 14 of the languages of the U.S.S.R., with a total print exceeding one million copies. The finest Soviet edition at the exhibition was that published in 1954 by the State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry with illustrations by Kukryniksy, some of the originals of which were on exhibition together with water colours by Valentin Serov of *Don Quixote* and *Sancho Panza*. Translations of *Don Quixote* into Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Kazakh, Turkmenian and other Soviet languages were to be seen at the Moscow exhibition.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Russian Writers on Literary Work. In 4 vols. (18-20 centuries). Editor-in-chief B. S. Meilakh, Ph. D. Soviet Writer Publishing House, Leningrad. Vol. I, 758 pp.

The volume contains various statements concerning literary work by writers of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century (Lomonosov, Radishchev, Derzhavin, Krylov, Griboyedov, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Belinsky and others).

The second and third volumes will comprise corresponding statements by 19th-century writers, from Herzen to Chekhov inclusive, and the fourth, those of Soviet writers.

★

The Moscow Dawn. By Lev Nikulin. A novel. Soviet Writer Publishing House, Moscow. 692 pp.

The new novel by Lev Nikulin, a writer of the older generation and author of many stories and the historical novel *Russia's Loyal Sons*, covers a period from the early 'nineties of last century up to the year 1919. The characters in the book belong to various strata of Russian society, but its main theme is the life of actors before the October Revolution. The book has many descriptions of Moscow, its old buildings and its history.

★

Lyrics. By Rasul Hamzatov. Translated from the Avar. The Young Guard Publishing House, Moscow. 189 pp.

Belonging to one of the North Caucasian nationalities—the Avar Rasul Hamzatov became a poet in the years of war. Some of his poems and verses, such as *The Year of My Birth, Land of the Mountaineers* and others, have been translated into Russian and won recognition throughout the country. The new book includes a selection of recent lyrical works.

★

Those Who Seek. By Daniil Granin. A novel. Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry, Moscow. 162 pp.

The Leningrad writer Daniil Granin, an engineer by profession, shows us a young Soviet engineer and scientist Andrei Lobanov engaged in research work and championing innovation in science. Some of the characters support and encourage Lobanov's work, others try to put obstacles in his path. These latter are nothing but careerists who use high-sounding phrases to cloak their complete indifference for people and science. The novel is to appear shortly in this magazine.

★

The Windy Shores. By Aadu Hint. A Novel. Translated from the Estonian. Soviet Writer Publishing House, Moscow. Book 1, 411 pp.

Aadu Hint is an Estonian short-story writer. His new book presents a comprehensive picture of the life of the peasants and fishermen of the Saaremaa Island at the beginning of this century. The social processes developing in Russia are beginning to destroy the traditional way of life there. The peasantry is disintegrating, many young people are moving to town to become workers and sailors. Hint shows us how that remote corner of the Russian tsarist empire is being gradually drawn into the revolutionary movement of 1905.

★

Collected Works. Sergei Mikhalkov. Two-volume edition. State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry, Moscow. Vol. I, 328 pp. Vol. II, 310 pp.

The first volume contains S. Mikhalkov's verses from the cycle *For the Glory of the Motherland*, some works written for children, rhymed satirical sketches and fables. The second volume contains the play *Ilya Golovin* and also plays for children: *I Want to Go Home, The Red Scarf, A Special Task* and *The Haughty Hare*.

★

Stories and Fairy Tales. By Vitali Bianki. State Publishing House for Juvenile Literature, Leningrad. 362 pp.

The writer V. Bianki spends much of his time in the woods equipped with a shotgun, notebook and a pair of field glasses. Since 1923, his stories, tales and fairy-tales have presented pictures of living nature, acquainting their young readers with the life of animals and plants. Bianki depicts the animal life of the Altai, the forests and lakes of the Urals, the life of the Arctic tundra, of the Siberian taiga and of the Central-Asian steppes. The popularity these stories enjoy with young and old is due to the warm feeling with which he writes of animal and bird life and also to the vivid style of the author and his power of observation.

★

Short Stories of 1953. Soviet Writer Publishing House, Moscow. 624 pp.

The volume contains short stories published in the Soviet press in 1953. Among them are stories by Ivan Aramilev, Sergei Antonov, Nora Adamyan, Nikolai Gribachev, Georgi Gulia, Vadim Kozhevnikov, Yuri Nagibin, Valentin Ovechkin, Dmitri Osin, Konstantin Paustovsky, Boris Polevoy and other writers.

★

Walt Whitman. By M. Mendelson. A Critico-biographical essay. State Publishing House for Fiction and Poetry, Moscow. 256 pp.

A study of the life and work of the great American poet and democrat. The author shows how Whitman was first impelled to write by the struggle against slavery in progress at that time in America and how his work expressed the protest of the people against capitalist oppression. Stressing the poet's humanism, he traces the spirit of optimism pervading Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* back to the American people. In conclusion, Mendelson speaks of the profound significance Whitman's work has in the struggle for peace and democracy today.

Problems of Stage Producing. A collection of articles by Soviet producers. Art Publishing House, Moscow. 464 pp.

Included in the volume are articles by distinguished Soviet producers, dealing with various theoretical and practical problems of the theatre. Thus, Alexander Popov treats of his experience of producing mass scenes and Gorchakov relates from his own memory how Stanislavsky used to work on plays by Soviet authors. Knebel dwells in her articles on the methods of producing employed by Nemirovich-Danchenko. Vasadze relates how Stanislavsky's cultural heritage is being used by the Georgian actors of the Shota Rust'hveli Theatre, and V. Balyunas points out the vast role Stanislavsky's system of work has played in the development of the national Latvian theatre. B. Kommissarzhevsky, in his turn, speaks of the relationships existing between producer and actor. Vlasov has dedicated his articles to the problems of a stage producer's art, and Tovstonogov to the relationships between the producer and the playwright.

★

The Peoples of Africa. The U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences' Publishing House, Moscow. 732 pp.

A work jointly prepared by the staff of the African Department of the Institute of Ethnography of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. Edited by D. A. Olderogge, Doctor of Historical Sciences, and I. I. Potekhin, Candidate of Historical Sciences.

This is the first of a series of ethnographical studies prepared by the Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnography of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. The subject of the book is the history of the African peoples from their origins to the present time. The work is arranged along ethnographical lines. It gives a comprehensive picture of the contemporary life of the African peoples, of their culture, ways of life and their struggle for independence. The volume contains many excellent illustrations and maps.

SOVIET LITERATURE

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Ieva Simonaityte



BUSÈ AND HER SISTERS

The Lithuanian writer Ieva Simonaityte was born in 1897 in Klaipeda district, which until 1920 was part of Germany. Her parents were workers, and she herself soon had to earn her living. She had a number of professions—one after the other. She was a dressmaker, a proof-reader, a reporter. That was how she first began to write short stories.

*Ieva Simonaityte's historical novels about the Lithuanian population of Klaipeda brought her recognition. The most important of them, *The Destiny of the Shimonises*, showed how Prussia in the 17th and 18th centuries followed a policy of treating the Lithuanians like the natives of a conquered colony. In 1941 Ieva Simonaityte published her story: *Fatherless*.*

*Since the war her stories have been printed in magazines and in book form (the 1948 collection). 1953 saw the publication of her new novel, *Busè and Her Sisters*, which we now present to our readers.*

PART ONE

1

IN THE very middle of Benagai, by the crossroads, lived Miksas Karnelis. Miksas Karnelis was a peasant. He had over seventy morgs of ploughland, four morgs of forest land, a farmhouse, a barn and stable, a team of horses, two cows and a good deal of other property of all kinds. He hired labourers or girls whenever he needed them.

Miksas Karnelis held piously to the belief that the sun moved round the earth, that the world had existed for five thousand years, and that up

in the blue sky were God and all His angels, while down below were the devil and all his imps. He knew that stones had ceased to procreate and multiply since the birth of Jesus Christ. He believed with equal fervour that the Germans were the cleverest and bravest people on earth. They had waged several wars in his time, and returned soldiers had told him that they had won them all. And Miksas Karnelis could quite understand why they were victorious—it was because they were so pious and feared God. For the rest, Miksas Karnelis was sure that if you were born a gentleman it was only right and proper that you should live and die a gentleman, and if you were born poor it was your duty to serve and submit to your master, even if he were not a real gentleman but only a plain employer; it was all the same so far as you were concerned.

When Miksas Karnelis took it into his head to marry, he went to the matchmakers; after all, he could hardly go against old custom and choose a wife for himself, without wise assistance and counsel. The matchmakers would be sure to know best what kind of wife would suit Miksas Karnelis. A pretty face did not matter, what he wanted was a woman who was capable and a hard worker, one who would make a good farmer's wife. And then . . . then he would be able to live in peace, to rest from all his hard labour, all the worries of the farm.

When the railway line leading from Germany to Klaipeda was laid, Miksas Karnelis thoroughly disapproved. The train was too noisy and ran too fast. It looked ready to jump off the rails at any moment! And besides, it frightened the horses. When Miksas had to go to town—four miles in all—his horses took him there quite fast enough. After all, why hurry? It was seldom he had to go to town, thank God. If somebody was ill, he knew what was needed without any doctors. For a toothache—take a good big glass of vodka. For a stomach-ache—the same thing. In general, vodka was the best cure for all ills of the flesh or the spirit. And it made you sleep well.

Best of all Miksas Karnelis loved to rest and take his ease. In fact he rested a good deal more than he worked. He who sleeps commits no sins, as the old saying has it. . . . And as for the work—what were labourers for?

Karneliene¹ worked more than she rested. But she too found it a burden. She would even begin to doze when she was working. And what kind of order can you have if the housewife dozes?

Such, then, was the life of the peasant Miksas Karnelis of Benagiai.

In due course four daughters were born, four handsome girls, each better than the last.

The first had black hair and black eyes. As soon as she came into the world she opened her mouth to scream, and she kept on with it day and night, never stopping. Karneliene did not know what to do. She burned incense round the child, and put magic flowers under her pillow, had old Simkewiene sprinkle the room over a piece of charcoal and light the fire with flint and steel, and even brought old Keraitis to mutter spells over the baby—but nothing helped.

Then the parents hurried on the christening, afraid that the child might scream herself to death. And Heaven forbid that she should die

¹Karneliene—the wife of Karnelis. In Lithuania women use their husband's surnames with the feminine ending (Karnelis-Karneliene).

without a Christian name! But as soon as the christening was over the child stopped screaming, as though for spite.

Well, so Busè¹—that was the name given her—no longer screamed day and night, but she soon found other ways of showing her family she was going to be a woman who knew what she wanted and meant to get it. If the mush given her was not sweet enough, she simply spat it out. She would push her quilt on to the floor with one good kick. Her mother, afraid that her feet might be cold, fastened it firmly to the wooden pegs of the cradle; but before she had time to turn round, that baby had either thrust her feet out from under it, or broken the string and kicked the quilt down on the floor again.

Busè found it dull sleeping the whole night through, and wakened early. After making sure that all her fingers and toes were whole and in their proper places, she gave voice in no uncertain manner, rousing not only her mother, but her father too.

"Heavens, there's no peace with that child! Got to have everything she wants and have it at once!" grumbled the mother with outward anger but a note of pride as well.

"Slap her bottom," was the paternal advice she often got from her husband, angry at being wakened in the middle of the night.

"Don't be a fool," Karneliene snapped back. "What can a baby like that understand?"

"Then put her in the other room with Lenè." (Lenè was the maid.) "Let Lenè sing lullabies to her!"

The upshot was that Busè, on the contrary, sang her own "lullabies" to the maids—first to Lenè, then Elze, then Siule and at last Minè—to such effect that they never closed an eye all night.

As Busè entered her teens, followed by her younger sisters, her peremptory voice was heard all day and everywhere.

"Barbe, wash the dishes! Magdè, peel the potatoes! Trude, go and mind the geese! Pa—can't you see the wheel's coming off the cart again? Take it to the smithy right away! No, don't go back to sleep—you'd sleep through the Last Trump! Ma—go and churn the cream!"

A maid, driven distracted, would bang down a bucket or pan and leave. Another came in her place, until she in turn lost patience with Busè's incessant "Don't stand there propping up the wall! There's plenty for you to do! Take a spade and go out to the field!"

Later on, when the girls were bigger and the Karnelis family no longer kept a maid but only a man, Busè would be after him all day, to make sure that he was never idle for a moment.

"Vilius!" (Or "Krizas," or "Jonis"—after Busè took charge, labourers did not stop long.) "Vilius, you'll be the ruin of us yet! You're not hired to loaf about. You're here to earn your keep! D'you think we're going to feed you for nothing? Take an axe and get off to the forest, it's full of dead wood, and not a log left in the kitchen!"

Sometimes her father or mother ventured to enquire timidly: "Why don't you do something yourself, Busè, instead of only giving orders?"

But she had her answer ready. "People need a stick on their backs, or they won't work, and there'll never be any proper order in the place. I'm not a maid, I'm the mistress. Have you ever seen me sitting about?"

¹ Pronounced Bousheh.

Certainly, nobody ever had. She seemed to be everywhere at once, ordering here, scolding there.

When Busè was still a child running about the village, she often used to hang around the rich farms. Why was it, she wondered, that some people got rich, while others close by, lived like beggars? How did it come about? Her keen eyes marked everything, her ears were pricked to catch fragments of talk and her receptive mind absorbed the plain, unadorned creed of accumulation: grab, sweep all you can into your own house, and pity nobody—look after yourself first, second and all the time. This was the rule of life Busè absorbed. Her one interest, her one care was the farm which she hoped to inherit. She wanted to make it a farm that people would look at with envy and respect.

"My farm will be just as good as the Sperberis estate one of these days," she vowed.

Busè made her presence felt everywhere. It was enough for her to come out into the yard, and the hens ran squawking in all directions, leaving only the cock, the bravest, crowing angrily on the fence. The dogs would streak off to the stable and wait there until Busè had finished storming and gone away again.

"She's so restless, always rushing about, our Busè!" sighed Karne-liene. "Who on earth does she take after? I'm as easy-going a woman as you'd find anywhere, and as for my husband! . . . Oh, he's stingy, I'll grant you that, he'll think ten times before he gives a copper to a beggar. But when it comes to work—he'll never break his back at it, or run his legs off. He lets other people do the work for him. . . . Though if you come down to it, that's what Busè does too. . . ."

Years passed and the four Karnelis daughters grew up. But the younger ones did less shouting and running about, and in general attracted no particular notice. Although for that matter, who else could possibly be noticed when Busè was around!

As they approached womanhood, however, people found that Barbe was kind and gentle—she often wept with those who were sad and laughed with those who were merry; they saw, too, that Magdè was a good, hard worker, and that Trude had clever hands and a pretty voice.

Busè, however, insisted that Barbe was a little hypocrite, that she only flattered people and tried to make up to those who were rich so that they would give her presents, and she was greedy as well—that Busè could prove.

"Now you're quite wrong there," her mother objected. She loved all her daughters alike and wanted them all to be admirable in every way. "Barbe always shares what she's got."

"Yes—if it's something she doesn't like!" cried Busè. "You wait and see! . . . And when Magdè works hard, or pretends to, it's just so people'll praise her. Can't you see how she likes to show off? And as for Trude . . . well, she's young yet, nothing but a colt. You can't tell what she's going to be like. She can embroider and knit and weave, but that doesn't mean she's a good worker. . . . Maybe a worker's just what she'll be some day and shame us all. Why's she always running off to church? Only to let people hear her squalling. And then she hangs around with all the neighbours' men and maids. Ugh! Not a single one of them's taken after me. They're all sort of—sort of—" But what sort they were Busè could not define.

Then one day Karnelis, weary of farming and unable to understand any of his daughters, took a headlong decision.

Busè learned from other people that Karnelis intended to sell his farm. Talking to a neighbour, he had said how sorry he was not to have a son; everything would go to Busè as the eldest, and she was crazy, quite crazy! With a mistress like that running the place, he would never be able to sleep peacefully, the one thing he wanted. But Barbe was lazy, a dawdler. Magdè was no farmer, and Trude—she was still young, he would get tired of waiting for her to grow up.

The talk went, however, that in actual fact Karnelis was badly in debt; he looked too often at the bottom of the glass.

When Busè heard that her father intended to sell the farm, she turned chalk-white. Was it for this she had worked and worried, day and night, never sparing herself? So that others should reap the benefit? How dared her father play a trick like that on her? The ground seemed to be sliding away from under her feet.

"Father—why are you doing it?" she asked agitatedly.

"Because I wish to!" her father replied. A glass or two had given him courage.

"And you really intend not to give me the farm?"

"I do."

"But why? Tell me why!"

"You're too bad-tempered and too fond of making other people sweat for you."

The very boldness of his own words sobered him. But he found that the ground had not opened under him, the sun had not darkened; only Busè, who still could not believe her ears, was sitting in front of him, red as a beetroot.

"Who? Me?" she asked, tonelessly.

"Yes—you! It's a pity I haven't a son, if I had. . . ."

"Father!" she said urgently. "Mark my words—if you do wrong by me, you'll be a beggar."

"You'll get your share, the same as your sisters. What wrong is there in that?"

"You'll give me the same as the others? Have the others worked like I have? You say yourself Barbe does nothing but dawdle, she was hardly out of short skirts when she started running around, showing off and making up to folks. And Magdè—now what's the use of her learning to sew? What does a farmer's daughter want with that? As though she couldn't pay a dressmaker! And as for Trude—she's just a colt. . . ."

About Trude she could find nothing bad to say. Trude was still a child, sitting at home singing softly to herself, peeling potatoes obediently and only stealing a moment now and then for her embroidery when nobody noticed her. So Busè could say nothing about Trude. She paused a moment, then continued: "Very well! Give all the others an equal share, but give me five hundred more. They'll never be farmers, but I shall. I'll show you and them too how to get on."

"No need to storm like that, Busè. By the sale agreement I shall have life maintenance, you can come and visit me whenever you like and for as long as you like."

"It's you who'll be glad to come and see us. If we let you. More than likely you'll not be asked!"

Years passed, it was already high time for Busè Karnelike¹ to be getting married, but she was still living with her parents in the house they had sold, but occupied under the agreement for life maintenance. Busè was waiting for a good match. But whether it was because people knew her father had sold the farm, or whether, more likely, because her character was too notorious, the matchmakers came to her but rarely.

Busè waited for a year, waited for two—and still there was nobody. Lines came on her forehead, ominous furrows deepened from nose to chin, and bitter chagrin filled her heart.

Meeting one of the village matchmakers, Busè clenched her teeth and tried to assume a jesting tone as she challenged the woman: "When are you going to get me off, neighbour?"

The matchmaker did not know what to answer. She could hardly say: "Who wants you now?" And indeed it would not be very wise. She would get an answer to make her hair curl. Everybody knew Busè Karnelike. Let anybody dare say in her presence that she had no farm! What if her father was living on land no longer his own? . . . Just try to argue with her!

2

It was the time of the spring fair, and Busè was walking back home quite alone. . . .

She seethed with misery and rage. Not a man had spoken to her all day—as though to clout her. All of them, acquaintances and strangers, had passed her by as though they could not or would not see her.

But Barbe? Ever since morning she had been running about with that—what was his name? Snekutis or something. He and his mother had a miserable little farm at the very end of the village, not far from Stragai-niai. A beggarly sort of place.

And Magdè—from the tail of her eye she had seen Magdè on the roundabout with some man or other—and pretty down-at-heel he looked, too.

And that colt Trude—even she had gone to the circus, Busè had not seen with whom. Yes, barely out of nappies, the milk not dry on her lips, and running about with boys. She'd be bringing home more than she set out with one of these days. A pretty kettle of fish!

It was still quite early but Busè made her way home angrily, fully determined to tell her father everything. He ought to give them something to remember. But then, look what he was like himself. . . .

What—*what* was she to do?

Busè often went to church—a little too often; people were beginning to talk. Oh no, Busè wasn't afraid of them, not she, but all the same, it isn't exactly pleasant when the neighbours guess at your secret hopes. And the plain truth was that the church was the best place for making acquaintance. But Busè found nobody. She went to market nearly every week, but there too she failed to find a man whom the daughter of Karnelis of Benagai would care to take for a husband. Would she really have to. . . ? Twenty-eight years will never be eighteen again! Her market-price was not rising, it was falling. Perhaps in the end she really would have to marry that widower, that liar Tamosiaus? But look at all the children he had! Would she be working for herself if she married him? She

¹ Form of surname for an unmarried daughter, Klaipeda dialect.

would not—she would be working for the children of his former wife. Nine of them! . . .

Eh—everything in this world's upside down.

Busè was sunk in gloomy reverie when Pikciurna overtook her. He too was going home alone.

"You've left the fair early," he remarked simply, without any special significance, pulling his cap down over his eyes.

"Yes, I decided to go. There's nothing interesting there!" Busè answered likewise, without attaching any meaning to the words.

"But the young men?"

"I don't pick up young men at the fair. I'm not that kind. But you—you've left early too."

Busè was afraid he would pass her and go on alone; she tried to match her pace with his. But Pikciurna had no idea of running away.

"I'm of the same mind," he answered unhurriedly. "You won't get far with a wife picked up at the fair."

"Of course—you're quite right."

Gradually, from one thing to another, they passed to really serious matters.

"I'm a farmer, you know that yourself," said Pikciurna.

"Yes, I know," answered Busè, thinking within herself: A fine farmer! Can't hire even the cheapest labourer. Aloud, however, she went on: "And you know me too—my father's Karnelis of Benagiai, they call him 'Big Karnelis,' because he's so tall. Of course he stoops a bit now, but they say he used to be very handsome. . . . There are several Karnelises in Benagiai, that's why they call my father 'Big Karnelis,' to distinguish him from the others. They say one of the Karnelises is a relation of ours, but I don't know anything about that. They're all out-at-elbows. But that one—Dangelas' son, you know him,—he wanted to marry me. Just think! What sort of a farm has he got? I'd be ashamed to marry into a place like that. After all, if you want to get on, you've got to have ground under your feet!"

Pikciurna knew Busè, he knew her father too, and ignoring all side issues he began to sing his own praises.

"I'm quite well off. Anything needed about the place I can do myself. I mend my own cart-wheels, I don't have to go to the wheelwright. I painted the cottage a while ago, made the walls blue and the floor brown. I don't have to send for any painter or anyone else when I want things done—they're robbers one and all."

Busè nodded, coughed with dignity, and straightened her kerchief.

"The roof began to leak, the rain came in on the hens," he went on. "Well, thinks I, if I send for the thatcher, it'll cost me a pretty sum. So I took and thatched it myself. It may not look as neat as Keilis would have made it but it didn't cost me anything. And it doesn't leak either."

"Why, there isn't a thing you can't do!" said Busè admiringly, thinking the while: If I were your wife, you wouldn't be crawling over the roof, disgracing me.

"That's as may be," said Pikciurna, "but, at any rate, when you do a thing yourself, you know how it's done."

"That's a true word! The only thing you need now is a good wife," said Busè, impatience getting the better of her. "After all, if you're a farmer why should you work like a labourer? You don't have to pay a

farm hand much, there are plenty who'll come for a crust of bread these days."

Pikiurna's face fell; Busè noticed it and hastened to give her talk a different turn.

"But say what you will, I like a man who isn't afraid of work. A farmer who knows how to do things himself can see that others do them properly."

"My horse went lame a while ago," Pikiurna continued, brightening up. "I took it to Klaipeda and exchanged it for one a Gipsy had. It's blind in one eye, but it isn't lame. If I'd tried to sell the other, what would I get for a lame horse? But if I wanted to buy one, I'd have to pay through the nose whatever it was like. I'll look after the new one, feed it up, and I'll have three good horses again."

Busè Karmelike nodded and nodded to everything he said. But she swore inwardly that she would never drive a Gipsy's horse, and one-eyed at that!

"One of my cows went dry. I fed it up, sold it to the butcher and bought one in calf. I'm expecting it to drop the calf any day now. It ought to have come last week. . . . Maybe it'll be today. My old mother's at home, waiting.

"So there it is—I've got everything in the world," sighed Jokubas Pikiurna, as though summing up, "only a wife's lacking."

"Now, that's the kind of man I like," said Busè, pretending not to have heard the final words, although they had raised great hopes within her. "I can't abide the kind of man who doesn't know how to cut a stake for a fence, let alone anything else. . . ."

"Aye, they're not much good. . . ."

Busè's praise flattered Pikiurna. He slipped a hand into his pocket where a pinch of chewing tobacco still remained, but then thought better of it and pulled out a handkerchief, blew his nose and polished it well. Perhaps Busè didn't like it when men chewed? How could he tell? After all, if he was going to think seriously of her. . . .

He slid a glance out of the corner of his eye.

She'd make a good housewife, he thought. Not bad looking, either. All the Karmelises are handsome. Only they say this Busè's got the devil's own temper and likes to order everyone round. But I'd soon bridle her. . . .

"I've got a lot of land," Pikiurna suddenly remembered he had not mentioned that so far. "But of course you know what Benagiai land's like. Only fit for pastures. If it were properly cultivated, of course, it would bring in a lot. But how's that to be done? It means hiring labourers, and using fertilizer—the way they do it on the big estates. And all that costs money. You know Benagys—the same kind of land, the same kind of fields, but what a farm he's got!"

"Oh well—you remember the old saying, Jokubas—'when wives die, mares multiply.' Benagys is living with his third wife—and d'you know how much money she brought him?"

"That's right, of course," Pikiurna agreed. I could marry too, for that matter—there are girls enough all round. But none of them suits me. Those that have money are either lame or squint-eyed, I don't want a wife like that. And without money. . . ."

"Why, Jokubas!" Busè interrupted. "With a farm like yours you've got to have money. And a girl ought to bring some kind of dowry with

her when she marries." Musingly, as though to herself, she continued: "Now my chest's stuffed full, I couldn't get another thing into it, not so much as a needle. Why, I've even ordered a second one. Five men couldn't move it."

"Yes, of course," said Pikciurna simply, in no way surprised.

"After all, one collects all kinds of things. One has to. When a girl marries she has to think of clothes for maids and farm hands. You can't make them from nothing. But if you've got everything all ready. . . ."

"You're right there!"

"And I've got a few hundred in the savings bank, too."

"Oh yes—just a few hundred!" Pikciurna's tone said he knew well enough it wasn't just a few hundred, but thousands Busè had in the bank.

"After all, I've got to marry sometime," Busè returned to the attack. "And I won't hide it—there's a few good matches I could make. Big farms. There's one I'm considering seriously. But of course the farm's not the only thing—I've got to think of the kind of person I'm going to spend my life with. I want the kind of man who doesn't smoke or drink. . . ."

Busè chose her words carefully. She knew that he did not smoke; as for drinking—well, who could say? But at least he was coming home sober from the fair, so he could not be a drunkard. She had already taken a few stolen looks at him and decided: not so bad, though he's no beauty. But where'll I find a handsome one? They don't grow on trees for the picking. After all, handsome is as handsome does. He'll listen to me and not cross me. And I'll get him out of chewing. . . .

About chewing, therefore, she said nothing.

"I've no debts," Pikciurna started off again as soon as Busè paused. "But I have to admit that you don't make thousands on a farm like mine. And there's one sister still got to have her portion. And my mother to feed. . . . I suppose you know my father's died?"

"Of course! Where d'you think I live?"

"My mother can take her share, and live with my sisters."

"God grant her many years! She's worked all her life and she's a right to her keep. I know your mother—she's a sensible woman, she deserves a good daughter-in-law. . . . I tell you, I like to do what's right and fair. I'd never act badly to those that are on in years."

"My mother's got her faults."

"Who hasn't?" Busè was ready to go through fire and water for old Pikciurniene. "Haven't we got faults too? But we ought to give way to old people. After all, we're still young."

"You're right, you're quite right," Pikciurna hastened to agree.

"On your farm with all that land you could do really well for yourself! But you need a capable wife. After all, your mother won't always be with you. Ugh, how I hate lazy dawdlers! My father always says to me: 'You could make a living off a stone, Busè.' That's what he says. And if your wife has a bit of money, too. . . ."



They were drawing level with a roadside inn, and now Pikciurna showed he was a man who knew what's what.

"What d'you say to dropping in at Teizingis' for a bit?" he suggested. "I had some hot sausage at the fair, too salty it was, and now my throat's like a lime-kiln. A mug of beer wouldn't be bad."

Busè Karnelike made no difficulties. They entered and sat down at the only table. Pikciurna ordered beer, then a bottle of vodka and a half pound of good sweets wrapped in paper.

First Pikciurna drank to Busè's health, then she drank to his, and so it went on until not a drop was left. Busè's cheeks were glowing and so were her spirits.

Pikciurna became bolder.

"With a woman like you, now, a man'd know what he'd got," he said, looking at Busè's red cheeks and sparkling brown eyes.

"I don't want to boast," she answered looking down modestly, "but there are folks who have a good word for me; they say you won't find others like me on every bush. There's a German, for instance. . . ."

"Others as handsome as you? Or what was it he meant?" asked Joku-bas, interested.

"Well, yes—handsome."

"Did he say that, now?"

Busè laughed and slapped his face lightly when he tried to embrace her too ardently, but she did not move away. As a matter of fact she would have found it difficult, for she was sitting in the corner of the settee. And by the time the inn began to fill up with people returning from the fair, Pikciurna and Busè Karnelike had come to an understanding.

It was late when Busè arrived home. Trude was already there, telling her mother about all she had seen and heard at the fair. There had been everything you could think of—a woman who swallowed eggs right in the shell, and a dog that could count, and clowns—no end of things. Then she began laughing at Busè rushing about all alone, not a man could she catch though she'd dressed herself up to the nines.

"Why doesn't she get married?" said Trude. "Look how old she is!"

"Aye, she'll be left an old maid yet. Remember, the higher you fly, the lower you fall," the mother admonished her daughter. "What a cross she'll be for us, it's terrible to think of! Even now if you try to say a word to her, she flies into a rage; what'll it be like later? If only she'd take that Tamosiaus. Of course he's ugly, all whiskers like a goblin and a houseful of children. But at least she'd have her own place. Only I'd be sorry for the children. She'd starve them."

The door banged, and Busè came flying into the room. Mother and daughter started—had she heard them talking about her?

Apparently not.

"Where's Father?" she asked curtly.

"Can't you say 'good evening'?" said Trude.

"You shut up, I've no time to bother with you. I've got to speak to Father at once. Where is he?"

"Go and pull him out of the inn," her mother answered and began to lay the table.

"Won't Mother do for you? Why've you got to have Father all of a

sudden? You always do what you want without asking either of them. What's got into you today?"

Trude wanted to tease Busè. She was in high spirits. At the fair, a young man whom she liked right away, at the very first glance, had got into talk with her. He had even brought her home! It was the first man who had ever brought her home or taken her seriously. And he did not ask whether her father would give her a dowry. He did not ask about anything. But in parting he said: "We'll be meeting again." And the way he said it! And the way he looked at her! When would it be? Neither he nor she had made any plans. But she felt sure she would see him . . . if not before, then at next year's fair. After all, she was still very young. But all that was a secret—she did not even tell her mother. She might tell Magdè. . . .

"I think you're right," Busè answered quite mildly. "I won't talk to Ma or to Pa either, I'll talk to you first of all."

"What?"

Trude was startled—what on earth could Busè have to say to her? Whatever it was, it boded nothing good. Perhaps Busè was just looking for another quarrel?

Apparently not. Busè's eyes gleamed like those of a cat that has just caught a fat sparrow, her cheeks were red as winter apples, and she wore a triumphant smile. She even looked younger.

"I'm going to get married. What d'you say to that?"

"I say—praise the Lord for answering your prayers at last! You've nearly gone grey waiting for a husband. And until you're married we younger ones have to wait too—from politeness. Well, who's the fine gentleman that's made a bid for you today?"

"Don't you dare to laugh, hussy!"

"What—me? I'm quite serious."

"You'd better be!" Busè threatened, but a smile broke through.

"Well—tell us!"

"Trude dear, Pikciurna wants me to bring two thousand. I promised I'd have it in my hand when I marry him."

"Pikciurna? You're going to marry Pikciurna?! Goodness, what you've come down to! You hear that, Mum?"

"I hear it, I hear it!" cried the mother joyfully. "Whatever he's like at least it's a husband, though not a very young one. He's taken even longer than you to find himself a partner. Well, he's found one at last. But where are you going to get two thousand? You know how much money there was and how it was divided. . . ."

"Busè, Busè!" laughed Trude.

She did not want to cry down Pikciurna, but he was so funny, with his crooked nose, his huge hands and short fingers, his clothes that did not fit, and a lumbering walk like a bear—now how could you help laughing at him?

"What's wrong with him? Why are you braying like an ass? You can be glad if you do no worse. Who were you running about with at the fair today? Think that one was any better?"

Trude blushed crimson. She was afraid her mother would notice and start asking questions.

"No, no, he's all right, he's fine," she broke in quickly. "All he needs is you and two thousand!"

"Yes, that's just it," said Busè eagerly. "You'll lend me four hundred, won't you? And then when I get rich I'll pay you back."

"Oho, so that's it! Why only four hundred? Why don't you ask for eight?" said Trude with some acidity. "I see myself giving you my money to pour down the throat of that drunkard of yours!"

"Trude, he's not a drunkard. And if he does drink I'll soon stop him, so don't start scolding. And there's another thing. You've got a chest and a cupboard too, you don't need all that. You haven't so many clothes, they'd all go in the cupboard. You're young yet, give me the chest."

Trude was thunderstruck. She knew that if Busè had made up her mind she would get her way in the end, cost what it might. But she hated the thought of giving up her chest—it had been made to her own order, she had dreamed of a chest like that ever since she had been a child. And that cupboard! A bit of rubbish that they had inherited from an aunt they had only seen once in their lives, and that once, at her funeral. None of the girls had wanted the cupboard and it had just stood in the shed, worm-eaten, peeling, with all the hinges off so that the door simply stood up against the opening.

"Why's that cupboard mine all of a sudden, and not yours? Take it yourself!" cried Trude. "I'll not give up my chest to anybody! All of you got good chests from Father, while I had to buy mine myself, you know that very well! And now you want to grab it, you wolf! Just try it!"

"You shut up! A kid like you, don't know how to wipe your nose yet, and talking back."

"Busè! What's got into you? Are you crazy?" the mother broke in.

"Busè! Busè!" her daughter mocked. "All you think of is coddling that brat! Don't you dare stop me getting married or it'll be the worse for you!"

"I won't give up my chest! I won't! I won't!" Trude wept loudly.

"Huh, I'm not going to argue with you two. Wait till Father comes—he's the one I'll talk to. He'll agree to whatever I want. He can do as he likes with her things and her money too!"

"You all do as you like, and all you do is rob those that can't help themselves!" wept Trude. "You've no shame! If you tried it with Barbe she'd scratch your eyes out. Mother—if you don't protect me from that wolf I'll go away and never come back again!"

"Oh dear, oh dear, what can I do, my baby? You see for yourself. And you, Busè, if I had the strength I'd drown you like a rat! You'll bring nothing but grief to people as long as you live."

"Hard words break no bones," replied Busè, unmoved. "You should have drowned me earlier on if you wanted to stop me making a success of my life."

"Success! Who do you take after, monster that you are?"

"Myself!" Busè declared. "Why are you both yelling as though you were being killed? All that fuss—about lending something to a sister. I'll give it back, I shan't eat it."

The father came home tipsy and promised Busè all she wanted.

"Of course! Why not? Plenty of water'll flow before it's time for Trude to get married," he said.

He was glad to be getting rid of Busè at last.

"Just the right name for her!"¹ the neighbours snickered when Busè Karnelike married Jokubas Pikciurna and moved into his cottage at the other end of the village.

Busè took no notice. They could snicker all they liked! She had a husband and a farm—not much of a one, but her own. There had been no choice. If she had waited any longer she might have been left on the shelf altogether. It wasn't a Sperberis estate, of course, but she knew how to make the most of it—and make the most of it she would.

"They'll soon get tired of yapping," young Pikciurniene decided.

She took charge of the farm like a whirlwind.

On the third day after the wedding she announced that they had celebrated long enough. Lazing about never made anybody rich.

"Life's short, the years run and the days fly like the wind, and look at your farm—how shabby everything is!"

Pikciurna frowned at the word "shabby," but he had to agree with his industrious wife—the place certainly wasn't up to much.

Pikciurniene needed help to get through all that had to be done. Her husband's sister worked a few weeks for her brother and his wife, and then struck. She announced that her back ached and lay down. But she complained to her mother that Busè would drive any girl to the grave.

"She gives me nothing to eat, she expects me to come to you for my food."

Her mother nodded.

"Yes, I can see what she's like, this daughter-in-law of mine. Better go and live somewhere else, and get out of her way."

The girl did so. Busè cared little, she only remarked that if her sister-in-law came along wanting her portion, then she, Busè, would know how to act. She thought everything over and had a fine idea. Trude! Why shouldn't Trude come and work for her?

"You won't be working for nothing, little Trude!" she urged her sister. "I'll give you something, an apron or a kerchief. You won't be like a hired girl, you'll eat at the same table with us. And you can drive to church with me too, you won't have to walk there. You can even sit in the same pew. I won't treat you harshly like a servant, you'll have a good home. Only of course you mustn't go about telling people you're my sister. Because after all I'm the mistress of a farm, you can see for yourself it wouldn't look well."

Trude Karnelike was not a ready talker and could not always find the right words to express herself. So she said nothing, only looked at her sister, sniffed contemptuously as much as to say: "A fine offer!" and tapped her forehead—which could be understood either as: "You're a fool," or "I'd be a fool if I made myself your servant. You've got enough out of me already."

All she said, however, was: "A lot of good it would do me, working for you!"

Pikciurniene, of course, lost her temper. Finally, she hired a servant.

One girl, however, was not enough, and soon she got a man too. After all, the farm had to go ahead, not stagnate. Pikciurniene was already thinking about buying land with her dowry—perhaps one of the neigh-

¹ Pikciurna in Lithuanian means a cross-grained, malicious person.

hours would be ruined and have to sell. But for the present what they had must be properly cultivated.

At the very end of Pikciurna's fields was some land grown over with heather, green in spring, purple in summer and black in autumn. That heather was a thorn in Pikciurniene's side. All the neighbours' children came there to pick wild berries. "Those ragamuffins are over everything like sparrows, and there's nothing left for me!" There were berries among that heather of all kinds—wild strawberries, black currants and bilberries. At first Pikciurniene would go running to drive off the children. But what was the use? They simply scattered in all directions and as soon as her back was turned, there they were again—like so many sparrows. So finally she found a time when there was nothing urgent to be done, and sent the labourer and the serving girl to dig up all the heather.

For some reason best known to herself she put the cows in the shed where the horses had stood. The hen roosts too had to be moved; they had been over the pigsties, now they were moved to the shed for sheep.

"They're safer here," she said. "If a sleepy hen falls among those pigs—they're like wolves, they'll eat a pedigree hen as soon as look at it!"

The wood shed had to be moved outside the gate because she found the yard too small for the kind of farm she intended to have. She ordered a well dug in the kitchen garden, and the garden itself made bigger. That meant moving the fence. And at the end of the kitchen garden she had to have a wicket gate.

As far back as anybody could remember the Pikciurnas had quarrelled with their neighbours about boundary lines. Every year they thought the neighbours had filched a bit. But the old Pikciurnas had been peaceable folk, they stormed and quarrelled, then quieted down.

"Eh well," they said, "it won't make them rich or us poor."

And so it went on.

But Busè demanded a surveyor.

Old Pikciurniene gasped, and Pikciurna was so startled that the quid of tobacco fell out of his mouth for the first time in his life. A surveyor? But that meant going to the authorities, to the Germans! A self-respecting Lithuanian never did a thing like that.

"D'you think they're just waiting to come as soon as you say the word?"

"They'd better come! It's for them to serve us, not the other way round. I'd like to see them try not to come!"

The surveyors came all right, they measured the fields, and found that the neighbour on the right had got one-and-a-half rikste¹ of the Pikciurna fields.

"What did I tell you?" Busè Pikciurniene cried triumphantly.

But Pikciurna had to give up two rikstes to the neighbour on the other side—Pluta.

"Why the devil did you have to start that?" For the first time Pikciurna was really angry with his wife. "Why can't you keep your nose out of what doesn't concern you?"

Busè could see for herself that it had not turned out quite as she wanted. She was not offended with her husband, especially as she had far-reaching plans of her own.

¹ Rikste—something over three yards.

"Who can tell?" she said, "Maybe it won't be long before we have those two rikstes and all the Plutas' other land as well."

In her heart of hearts, however, she realized that she had made a foolish mistake, and resolved to be cleverer in future.

The path from the farm to the highway ran crookedly along the neighbours' irrigation ditches, across the vegetable plot and round the pond. Pikciurniene made a straight road in its place, although that meant cutting a corner off the clover field, filling in one ditch and building a bridge over another. With her own hands she planted limes along either side of the new road to make it look like an avenue leading to a manor house.

The highroad which ran through the Pikciurnas' fields had a sandy surface which made walking difficult, and a little pathway had been trodden beside it. Nobody could say how long that pathway had existed, but there it was and there it would probably remain.

Pikciurniene, however, had her own ideas about that. The highroad was there for driving and walking, not for the grass to grow on it. She gave orders for the pathway to be ploughed up. But that did not help. A new path was soon trampled, wider than the old one. Then Pikciurniene put boundary marks at either end. When people saw the poles wound round with straw they first stopped in surprise, then simply pulled them out. Pikciurniene put a fence across the path and hung up a board with the word: *Verboten!* She thought the German would make it more impressive. But that did not help either. What people! For all the world like geese—got used to one thing, and you couldn't teach them anything different.

But Pikciurniene was firmly determined to see the matter through.

One fine Sunday after dinner she took her prayer-book to pass the time and drove the geese out herself to the end of the field where the grass was rich and juicy. She took a bucket of water for the geese, settled down under the bushes not far from the highroad and waited for passers-by.

They soon came.

She had little time to read, for the day being Sunday, plenty of people were out for a stroll. Busè shouted at them, pointing to the road. With some she appealed to their conscience, with others to their honesty; and if none of that helped, she threatened to sue them. She shouted and shouted at the top pitch of her voice, even when nobody was there she still kept on shouting, storming and threatening from sheer inertia. The next day she was too hoarse to do more than whisper.

Once order was established outside, so far as it lay within her powers, Busè turned her attention to the inside of the house. But here she came up against her mother-in-law.

"This is how I found it all when I came and this is how I shall leave it. Don't you dare touch anything as long as I'm alive," said the old woman sternly.

"What's the meaning of that? Who's the mistress here—you or I?" asked Busè.

"When I married Pikciurna and his parents lived here, I was the mistress just like you. But I didn't start making changes, I left everything just the way they wanted it. And we all lived together peacefully until they died."

"D'you want to make me live as they lived a hundred years ago? Oh no, my dear mother-in-law, times have changed! We're not going to live in the past!"

"I've said my say. I won't have it and that's enough. Not another word!"

Busè lost her temper.

"I'm not asking you whether you want it or whether you don't. Things are going to be as I want. And I want this place to be a proper house, not like some shed! It's not your money I shall build with, the money's mine. Don't stick your nose in where nobody wants you!"

"I won't have a wall right across the house!"

"Won't you? We'll see about that! I know what you want, you just want to spy on us, to see when we go to bed, what we eat and who comes to see us, and then go and tattle all over the village!"

"I'm not going to be pushed away behind the stove! I won't have it!"

"Nobody's trying to push you behind the stove! Sit there in your corner, but sit quiet."

"A nice thing! Here comes a strange wench and starts doing as she wants just as though everything were hers. That's enough, no more of it!"

All the rest Busè could have stood, but those words "strange wench!" The old hag must be in her dotage!

Busè made no reply but set to work. She put up a partition across the cottage, turning one large room into two smaller ones—one for herself, the other for her mother-in-law. At first she had intended making them both more or less equal in size—after all the old woman could not live for ever, and the other room would come in handy. But since she had chosen to interfere and make a fuss, Busè gave her a narrow little cubby-hole. She cut a door in the partition wall and always kept it locked. But there she struck a snag, for her mother-in-law nailed up the door altogether on her own side. That was her revenge.

Busè had a separate stove built in the kitchen, so that the old woman would not be in her way all the time. She put her out of the pantry altogether, and told her what door she was allowed to use. Old Pikciurniene ought to be grateful for that—the agreement had said nothing about a door. But for Busè's kindness she would have had to crawl in to her kennel through the window.

According to the agreement the old woman had the right to keep two hens, but she kept three. So long as they were on good terms her daughter-in-law had said nothing, although it went against her grain. Nor had she raised any objections to the cat. But when the old woman called her a strange wench, Busè quoted the agreement, plainly and accurately as though reading it out.

"You cannot raise two pigs. You cannot keep a third hen. Nor are you allowed to keep that dratted tom-cat that probably kills our chicks. The agreement doesn't give you the right to bring in anyone to live here. So your daughter can come to see you, but she must not stop the night. The agreement says you can go to market twice a month, and you've been going nearly every market-day without asking whether there was room in the cart, or whether we wanted to go ourselves. *Ordnung muss sein*," she added in German, to sound more impressive.

The old woman was ready to go to court. But what was the good? It's no use kicking against the bricks. She cried, then she dried her tears, drowned the cat, killed one of the pigs, and married her daughter off to some Putriaus who had no farm of any kind. She could not find a prosperous farmer because according to the agreement the time had not yet

come for the girl to have her portion. And Busè held that agreement over her mother-in-law's head like a club.

Having surrendered all along the line, the old woman decided to die—at least, that was what she threatened.

But Busè, seeing that her mother-in-law really was submissive, made a noble gesture—she permitted her to keep a third hen. After all, the old woman might come in useful—for instance, when the time came for Busè to give birth. And that time would come. There would be no need for a midwife. Old Pikciurniene was known all over the district for her skill in those things.

4 .

Every day when Pikciurna had a free moment he would examine his fence, gate and roof most carefully.

His grandfather's favourite maxim had been: "Always keep your fence and roof in order!"

After the grandfather died, his father would say: "Ruin starts with the fence. Look at—" and he would mention some neighbour. "He's breaking up his fence for firewood. Mark my words, he won't last long."

Sure enough, sooner or later that man would lose his farm.

On the other side of one of Pikciurna's stout fences lived Jonis Malone. Pikciurna considered Malone to be no solid farmer, even something like a pauper, although Malone's farm was actually not much smaller than Pikciurna's.

Jonis Malone had no fences or gate at all, and there was no sign that there had ever been any. The various buildings seemed to have been dropped at random. And in the middle of this farmyard—if one could dignify it by the name—lay a pond covered with duckweed in autumn, and cracked ice in winter, full of frogs in spring and of all kinds of vermin in summer. Close to the cottage was the cellar. But what a cellar!—nothing but a hole in the ground, barely covered over. That was how Malone had inherited it from his father, and it was evidently how he intended to leave it.

Pikciurna, and Pikciurniene still more, lived in hopes that Malone would go under any moment. That would be a fine ripe plum for them. Look at him—call that a farmer? No fence, no gate, horses that were just skinny nags, cows that were all bones, pigs that were all bristles.

Everything they had and did was a muddle. In the summer Pikciurniene was constantly having to drive out their livestock; their hens were for ever getting into Pikciurna's kitchen garden, their cows and horses into the clover and oats. . . . Perhaps things were not really as bad as the Pikciurnas thought, but they themselves had no doubts. If a farm had no fence and the roof leaked, then the ropes to tie up the stock would naturally be rotten too. Of course Malone ought to go down. That was certain, if anything was!

But Malone kept on. People even said that he had money put away. Pikciurniene could not and would not believe it. Would they live like that if there was any money? Without a single labourer, without even the cheapest hired girl, doing every mortal thing themselves? Of course not!

On top of everything else there were sometimes quarrels. The kind neighbours have.

Malone had a dog. Not any decent kind of a dog, just an ordinary cur, black as the devil's imps. His name was Sabalius.

One day when Malone was at the market and Maloniene was kneading dough, the postman came and happened to let the dog loose. Sabalius at once completely forgot his duty of barking at the postman and set off in search of adventure. After sniffing about here and there, he began to investigate the neighbour's recently mended fence. Now in that excellent fence there was a loose board, so loose that it could be moved from side to side. And of course it was just this board the dog found. Sabalius thrust an inquisitive nose through into the yard. Seeing nothing alarming, he pushed the board aside and followed his nose—which led him into the hen-house.

There his arrival caused an enormous sensation. The Pikciurnas were too stingy to keep a dog, so the hens had seen such beasts only at a distance. Even the bold red cock stood thunderstruck. The first to recover from the shock was a spotted hen; she realized that here was cause for panic, and proclaimed one. A brown hen which had just laid an egg flew down squawking from the nest, catching the edge and tipping it over. The three or four eggs fell down and smashed. At the sight of this mishap the cock crowed angrily, and that was the signal for a general confusion of clucking and squawking and fluttering.

Pikciurniene, who was having dinner, thought a hawk had got into the hen-house and came rushing out with her mouth full; when she saw the cause of the tumult she nearly choked. There was no weapon within reach so she ran for a spade, but by the time she came back Sabalius was gone. He was romping about the field where Pikciurna's sheep were grazing. And the cock was pecking at the broken eggs.

Pikciurniene's hair stood on end at the sight of the destruction.

"Tie up that cur of yours, you good-for-nothing!" she screamed at the neighbours over the fence.

"What's that old crow cawing about?" said Maloniene angrily.

"I'll give you old crow! Can't you even talk decently?" Pikciurniene raved.

"What d'you want?" Maloniene asked. Her arms were in the dough and she was covered with flour, so she could not leave her door.

"Tie up that dog of yours, don't let him out into other folks' yards. Look what he's done! Smashed the eggs, frightened the hens and sent them running all over the place!"

"I've no time to run after dogs."

"Did I say you're to run after him, you fool? Everything you've got's falling to pieces, even the dog's tied with rotten ropes!"

"Keep your fences mended," was Maloniene's calm advice. "You're always fussing over them, and they can't even keep a dog out."

"Got to watch you the way one 'ud watch thieves, however good our fences are. Took and let the dog loose, and over here it came. And as if that weren't enough, it's out in the field now worrying the sheep. Nobody could live with neighbours like you—no matter how hard they tried, they couldn't!"

"Oh, get out! Everyone knows you, Busè. Spoiling for a fight, are you? I haven't heard your sweet voice for a few days past. Has your husband given you a hiding?"

"What's it got to do with you, you toad, how my husband and I live? I'll give you. . . ."

But the rest of what they told one another cannot be reproduced.

Malonienė forgot the flour all over her and ran out to the fence. So did Pikciurnienė. And there they stood screaming shrilly at one another.

It was a grand quarrel.

The hens had long ago forgotten their alarming black visitor. Only the brown hen still mourned over the overturned nest and the broken eggs. She had been hoping for a family of chicks.

Sabalius had had a grand time in the fields, frightened some children coming home from school, dug up a few molehills, driven the sheep to the Pikciurnas' gate and come back home again. And now he was sitting on the grass wagging his tail as though applauding his mistress, and licking his chops.

But there were some things quite beyond words.

One time when Pikciurnienė had quarrelled with her husband—things like that do happen—she ran to take refuge with the neighbours. And to whom?—To the Malones. They had already gone to bed. Busė knocked at the door, then tapped the window; but nobody let her in or even answered, although she could hear whispering and something that sounded like laughter.

Yes, taking it all round, those Malones were a thorn in her side. And they even had the impudence to put on airs with the Pikciurnas. Try to talk to them and they'd hardly answer you, and if they did, it was in the tone they would use to a dog.

Busė swore she would never forgive them for that.

5

Time went on as time does. Busė Pikciurnienė was so busy putting everything in order that she forgot her sisters. Or if she did not quite forget them, at least she had no time to think about them. And now suddenly she heard they had started getting married, one after the other.

Barbė married Jonis Snekutis of Benagiiai. He had a farm of his own and not a bad one—over twenty morgs of land. But that did not stop Pikciurnienė from going about calling him a pauper. Look at his sheds and barn—no room to swing a cat. And as for livestock—a couple of scrawny cows, a horse dying on its feet and a few pigs. Pikciurnienė would blush to visit a place like that. And people would talk about "your sister Barbė. . . ." She would die of shame!

Barbė insisted, however, that her Jonis was good looking and a kind husband. Good looking? Now where were those good looks, Busė would like to know. In his yellow moustache twisted the German way? Or his tie? Just wait—Pikciurna would be wearing smarter things than a tie one of these days. . . .

The fact was, Busė could not forget that Snekutis had once called her an old maid. It had been at the fair. And she had been younger then than Barbė was now.

It was time she paid him out for that "old maid." What would he think of her today?

And Magdė? Magdė did even worse for herself—went off and married Marcius Silbakis. A wheelwright. Of all things—for Magdė to marry a wheelwright! She used her dowry to buy a little land from Berk of Benagiiai, for in a village of that size a wheelwright would never find enough work to supply his wants and save up for a big farm of his own.

"A farm indeed—they don't intend to save at all. They think they're all right as they are. But what about me? My sister a wheelwright's wife!"

Busè knew Silbakis too, she had met him at a farm where he was making wheels. She had seen him casting sheep's eyes at her, what's more. At her! The impudence of it! When she put him in his place, he started jeering at her and played all kinds of tricks—put a hedgehog in her bed, and pushed a stone down her sleeve where it sat so tight that she had to unstitch the sleeve to get it out. A devil, pure and simple!

"But he's managed to slink into our family all the same. Just to annoy me, to get his revenge. And Magdè, the fool, let him talk her round!"

Then, as though marriage were infectious, that snot-nose Trude, only twenty-one, caught herself a husband as well. And just think who it was—Bublis, an ordinary labourer!

"Dear Lord in Heaven! All of them marrying paupers! Every one!" groaned Pikciurniene. "What on earth shall I do? I'm ashamed to look people in the face!"

There was something queer about Trude and her husband, too—they did not act like other people. They had only a civil wedding, and when Busè asked when they intended to go to church, Trude blushed, gave her a funny look and said nothing. Perhaps it was true what people said? . . . And what they said was that he was a democrat, that he did not believe in either God or the Devil, that he abused the Kaiser and the priests and talked about some kind of equality and freedom. . . . He ought to find himself a good master, then he'd soon forget about all this equality!

What on earth had Trude done with her money? Her father had given her enough, even though the amount was less than what Busè and Barbe got. Everybody knew what the others had done with theirs, but about Trude nothing was known. Perhaps Bublis had had debts? Of course, Pikciurniene herself had taken half of Trude's share. But where was the rest?

It was a disgrace to have relations like that! Nothing to be proud of, nothing to admire about them, no pleasure out of having them to your house, or going to see them either. What could they treat you to if you came, what had they to put on the table? And in case of trouble. . . . No, better have nothing to do with such paupers.

Busè Pikciurniene did not break with them altogether, however, although she herself could hardly have said why. Perhaps it was just to keep an eye on them, so that . . . so that. . . . After all, you never knew what the future would bring. Time would show!

One Sunday morning Pikciurniene went to visit the Snekutises. She found her sister still in bed, and Snekutis preparing breakfast. Barbe was looking very pretty, rosy as an apple, pleased as a kitten.

"See what a husband I've got! Does your Pikciurna get up to make breakfast for you?" she asked with a spice of sly malice.

Pikciurniene swelled with anger and insulted pride.

"I've got a maid to make breakfast for me."

"Why, do you keep her tied down on Sundays too like a slave?"

"She wants to eat on Sundays, too, doesn't she?" Busè snapped.

"Oh yes, I forgot—you keep count of every crumb! . . . A-a-ah! How nice it is to lie comfy in a warm bed one morning a week!" And Barbe yawned and stretched luxuriously.

"He who throws away crumbs will never fill barns," Pikciurniene admonished her sister. "Aren't you ashamed to lie there dawdling like

that? Even though I've got maids to get my breakfast" (she had only one, but "maids" sounded grander) "all the same I never lie abed till this time of day. You'll never get rich that way!"

But Barbe was not at all ashamed. Six days a week she was up first, why couldn't Jonis get up once?

"And he does so love doing things in the house!"



Snekutis soon showed that he not only liked domestic work, but was very handy with it.

"Come to breakfast, Schwägerka,"¹ he invited Pikciurniene, ignoring the sisterly exchange of scratches. He put the choicest pieces on her plate and kept pressing this and that on her. "Take more! It's all bought with my earnings, the work of my hands!" he said proudly.

"Now, now! You've no room to boast to me!" She said no more, but paid full and deserved attention to the food and real coffee.

When Pikciurniene went to visit Magdè Silbakiene, she found the two of them chasing each other round the well. On an ordinary working day. At first she thought they were quarrelling, but it turned out that they were just fooling about, playing like kids.

"Have you both gone crazy? How far'll you ever get that way? Can't you hear the pigs squealing? Got no more than a couple of porkers to rear and can't feed even those properly. You'll be begging your bread yet, mark my words!"

Actually, the pigs were not squealing and everything on the farm was in perfect order. But Magdè nevertheless blushed for shame and went quickly to the kitchen to prepare feed, and Silbakis took himself off to a small room he had taken for his own, where he began tootling on a large trumpet.

"Well! What next, I wonder? What's the idea of that? It's clear Silbakis has no work, or he wouldn't have time for that sort of nonsense!"

Silbakis made no reply and Magdè busied herself in the kitchen. She was in her own house, Busè could hardly start pulling her hair out as she had at home. So Magdè simply said that her husband played the trumpet in church. He knew how to play, and people had asked him to play there, so in the end he had agreed. If not every Sunday, at least for the big festivals.

"They're all like that, those trumpeters!" snapped Busè contemptuously. "They scoff at God but they go and play the trumpet in church! Think

¹ A corruption of the German *Schwäger*—brother-in-law, with a feminine ending.

they can buy folks' respect that way. . . . Ought to be ashamed of themselves!"

"Oh, goodness, Busè, there's no pleasing you. If my Marcius goes to the inn you start scolding, if he finds some other amusement it doesn't suit you either! So far as I can see the only thing that 'ud keep you quiet is for us both to hang ourselves!"

Here was something to answer. But Busè had no time, and still worse, she did not quite know what to say. One word, however, she caught hold of, and made a whole song about it.

"Amusement? Amusement! So going to church is just amusement?! You wait a bit! I'll have a word to say to the priest about that! And that Marcius of yours 'ull go flying out with his trumpet like. . . ."

Like what, she did not wait to say; she simply shot out of the gate herself.

Pikciurniene's words came true quite soon—Silbakis did in very fact go flying out of the church; only he was not put out, he went of his own accord.

It happened this way.

The next Sunday, or a little later, there was a church festival of some kind with all the trumpeters present. Everything was going splendidly, at least so it seemed. But after one of the hymns the organist, who could never let anyone forget he was a real German, turned towards the congregation, twisting his moustache, and said loudly enough to be heard not only by Barbe who heard everything, but by Pikciurniene too: "*Die Litauer singen wie Ochsen!*" (The Lithuanians sing like bulls bellowing!)

The next moment something fell with a ringing clatter—an amazing thing to happen in church. People turned round, and saw Silbakis running out without his trumpet.

Barbe burst into indignant tears. And Pikciurniene was thoughtful. She did not know whether to be ashamed because she was a Lithuanian and "sang like a bull bellowing," or to be angry with Silbakis for boldly throwing down his trumpet and slamming the church door after him.

As though he were at an inn! The foul fiend must be in him, she thought, outraged. Well, I'll tell him a thing or two. But that Herr Organist needs a few words too. Did we really sing as badly as all that? No, I'd better speak to the priest first. That organist's a German! Or maybe it would be better to speak to them both?

When you come to think of it, to have the opportunity and the occasion to speak to the priest or the organist was no small honour if one liked that kind of thing. . . . Busè Pikciurniene had long envied the Elders . . . they had the right to enter the church through the vestry.

Why didn't Pikciurna get on the church council, she asked herself. Simply because he was too stupid. And he couldn't talk German properly. Nevertheless, she meant to act, she would show those gentlemen that even if her husband wasn't very learned, she herself knew what was fitting. She wasn't giving way to any German!

Pikciurniene went to see the Bublises a number of times, but there she could never find any signs of foolishness. Although it was true that they did not go to church. Bublís was always busy, if not in his workshop then round about the house and yard, while Trude would be either spinning or weaving or mending clothes.

Pikciurniene, however, had no faith in all this virtue, and so her visits to them were fairly frequent.

One fine Sunday she arrived without warning after dinner, and caught them.

They were sitting together under the birch tree by the window, Trude leaning against Bublīs' shoulder, her hand in his. He was reading something in German and translating it into Lithuanian.

"You understand?" he asked.

Trude nodded, then said on a plaintive note: "Shall we live to see it?"

"If all the workers act together, we shall."

It was at that moment that Pikciurniene appeared round the corner. Of course, it was Sunday, so they were not working. And they were reading—that was really good! Perhaps they would learn wisdom. After all, there were many pious books—by Jonas Orantas, and August Hermann Francke, and Luther, and Pastor Pipiras. . . .

"God guide your hearts. Now this is good to see! How glad I am. You do well to strengthen your souls with the Word of God!" cried Busė affectionately, or at least as affectionately as she was able. "What is your book? I don't remember ever seeing one like that."

"We want to learn more than there is in prayer-books," Trude ventured to say.

Heavens above, thought Busė, what's this?

"Are you a democrat, too, now? Listening to all the rubbish those socialists talk? Is that what my sister's come down to?" Pikciurniene was ready to weep. "Was there ever such a disgrace! What shall I do, where shall I hide my face! Paupers—well, all right. . . . But *this!* In our own village!"

Then she recovered her wits and announced that the barking of dogs would never reach heaven and she, Busė, had nothing to fear, thank God; it would be a long time yet before any democrats or socialists ruled the world. And if ever they did, it wouldn't be some Bublīs!

After pouring all this out she hurried home. She even felt easier in her mind. In the first place she knew now how the Bublīs spent their leisure, and in the second, she had told them a thing or two. And in the third place—everything was now clear!

6

In course of time old Karnelis died. As for the mother, she had slipped unobtrusively out of the world some time before. Folks said that the people who had bought Karnelis' farm and had to maintain him for life in his old home had not treated him particularly well. As soon as Barbe married Snekutis, her father decided that he wanted to live with her.

There were, however, differing opinions about how much this was really his own wish. Pikciurniene went about saying that her sister had lured him with honeyed words. Be that as it might, Karnelis went to live with the Snekutises. And they welcomed him with open arms. That was a fact. But the point of the whole matter was that when he moved in he took everything he owned with him—several cartloads. All sorts of rubbish, Snekutiene called it, but Pikciurniene knew there was quite a lot of good stuff, too. And in addition to that, the money for maintenance under the agreement went to the Snekutises as well—quite a tidy sum.

In consideration of all this, Barbe ought to have been ready to do anything for her father, to satisfy his slightest wish—so Busè thought. And as we have said, Barbe certainly welcomed him with open arms. But as for satisfying his slightest wish—! The old man even went to Busè to complain that Barbe treated him badly and said he would prefer to come and live with her, Busè. When Barbe had already taken possession of all his things!

Busè reminded her father that she had warned him against Barbe. And now he could see that she was right.

The father found little comfort in that, and announced that he was going to die.

And die he did. He took leave of the world and his property and his daughters.

While neighbour Padagiene watched over the dying man, Barbe, who said the sight was more than she could bear, hurried off to her father's chest in the closet to gloat over its contents.

"Just look at all this," she said to herself. "Father's got heaps of things he's never worn! This sheepskin's quite new, and there's two pairs of homespun trousers (Pikciurna could have made use of those, hee! hee! hee!). Now, what shall I do with them? Sell them. They're worth money! Jonis doesn't like country things, he's lived with Germans, he likes town clothes. . . . What a lot of things Father had. . . . Oh!"—Barbe's eyes glowed. "Six shirts, all new! Why, Father hoarded everything like a squirrel! And here's a dress for holidays. . . . He might have lived another year. Anyway, we must all die sometime and leave all earthly things! And here's money! Wrapped it up in an old piece of rag and pushed it right down to the bottom so that we shouldn't find it. Of all the crafty old men! Pikciurniene doesn't know anything about that money, I'll be bound. And all in gold!"

Barbe quickly untied the rag, counted the money and slipped it into her pocket. She not only resolved to say nothing about it—she forbade herself even to think of it.

Now which shirt shall I bury Father in? It'll have to be a new one, I suppose. It seems a shame! What if we bury him in this homespun, would it be such a sin? It'll rot just the same, whatever it is. What difference does it make? After all, when will Jonis ever be able to get shirts like these? It's not so easy to manage when you're poor. . . . God must have remembered our need. Now my Jonis will have something to wear. And that linen will do for me. Pikciurniene will be furious. But why should I give her anything? Yes, but what shall I put on Father when he's dead?

For a long time Snekutiene wrestled with her good heart.

"Aha, I know what to do!" she cried at last. "I'll use the shirt Jonis bought in Dortmund. It's not new, of course, but it's good enough for a dead man. He won't be working in it, no fear of its getting torn. And it's soft material, white and starched like the gentry wear. Better than that homespun, it won't chafe him," Snekutiene added for greater justification.

While Barbe's good heart was fighting a losing battle with her hard head, old Karnelis died. Padagiene closed his eyes and ran to fetch his daughter.

"What, already?" she cried. "I'm coming, I'm coming right away! And bringing a shirt to put on him,"

With the neighbour's assistance Barbe put the Dortmund shirt on the dead man, then laid him out in the closet, on the chest which contained his property, and covered him with white linen. She put a few spruce twigs on top as well to make it look better, so that Pikciurniene would not be able to find any fault when she came.

Two days later, Barbe had sold the rough linen shirts and the homespun trousers and bought herself a black silk kerchief and apron for the funeral. She had not forgotten Jonis either, she had bought him a black tie—what more did a man need?

Everything seemed in order. But for some reason Snekutiene did not feel comfortable. Perhaps it was because the corpse was still in the house . . . or perhaps she really was sorry her father had died. . . . If somebody knocked or the cat jumped down from the stove, if the gate creaked or the dog's chain jingled, it made her jump nervously. She drank salt water but it did not help.

Ah, here was Pikciurniene! Pushed her nose through the gate and then followed it in. Barbe paled as though the dead man had risen to confront her

"God be with this house!" said Pikciurniene.

"Thank you!" whispered Snekutiene.

"What are you doing these days?" Pikciurniene enquired.

"The same as usual," Snekutiene answered.

"Well, and so Father's dead," sighed Pikciurniene.

"Yes . . ." sighed Snekutiene.

"Followed Mother to a better world."

"Yes. . . ."

"When are you going to bury him?"

"We thought—on Monday."

"Oh, my dear Barbe, that's far too long! You can't keep a corpse as long as that in summer time."

"There's no other way. You know yourself you can't have a funeral on a Saturday."

"But you could on Sunday!"

"Yes. . . . Only I don't know if the coffin 'ull be ready. A lot of people have died—Kupriene, and old Vanagas, and Paleikiene's baby. Skeraitis can't keep pace with them all."

"Oh, rubbish! Silbakis can make the coffin. He'll do it tomorrow."

"But people will have to be told. . . ."

"Give me a pencil and paper, I'll write a note and send it through the village."

Snekutiene went obediently to fetch pencil and paper. First, however, with a beating heart she asked her sister if she wouldn't come inside and have a cup of coffee.

No, Pikciurniene wouldn't.

Snekutiene hunted in all holes and corners, but no pencil or paper could she find.

Where on earth had Jonis hidden them? Snekutiene was irritated with her husband and her sister too. That Busè—she could never let anything alone. Here was the coffin ordered, and the grave-diggers already engaged for Monday. . . . Now where in the world could the things have got to?

There was no pencil in the table drawer, or in Jonis' trousers' pocket. . . . She found the ink behind the clock, but there was no pen. At

last that turned up on the shelf. As for paper, Barbe simply tore a sheet from an old exercise book and ran out into the yard.

Where was Pikciurniene?

Busè had gone to the closet where the corpse was laid out and was examining everything carefully—where the body lay and how. . . .

She wept, but her eyes missed nothing.

She saw, for instance, that the dead man had not been shaved, and his hands were empty—no Bible had been placed in them.

"Like some heathen! . . . But what's this?"

Pikciurniene fingered the shirt. Could she be mistaken? Impossible! But no, it was true—the shirt was an old one.

Pikciurniene continued her investigation.

Snekutiene appeared in the doorway with pen and paper.

At that moment Pikciurniene uncovered the body completely.

"Oh my heavens, what are you doing?" cried Snekutiene.

Her sister took no notice. It was dark in the closet, but Snekutiene had forgetfully opened the door wide, and Busè saw that she had made no mistake—the sleeve of the shirt was even torn. A bony elbow could be seen through the rent.

"Barbe!"

Snekutiene's heart turned over. "Oh Heaven," she sighed, but Heaven did not help her.

"Whose shirt have you put on Father?"

Barbe made no reply. She rubbed the back of her neck, straightened her kerchief, reddened—and kept silent.

"You thieving bitch! What have you done with Father's shirt? Open your mouth!"

"What shirt? His shirts were all. . . ."

"I made one myself for his funeral last year—wove it, bleached it and sewed it with my own hands! What have you done with that shirt? Out with it! . . . Not a word to say, haven't you? Taken it yourself, I suppose? What have you done with his other shirts? Where's the sheepskin? Where are his cloth trousers? Where are all his clothes?"

"You're crazy! Is a sheepskin to go with him in the coffin?"

"Show me all the things he left, bring them out!"

"Busè, Busè dear, remember he was an old man," Barbe protested. "He hadn't anything left! You know yourself he liked his glass. He. . . ."

She might have spared her breath. Pikciurniene rushed at her and delivered a box on the ear that made Barbe see stars.

"I'll show you, you shameless hussy! Plundering Father in his coffin! Robbing your sister! Take that! And that!" And Pikciurniene, beside herself, struck out furiously, landing blows wherever she could.

The shock and the pain restored Barbe's wits; since peaceful overtures were clearly useless, she began to give as good as she got.

"If you want a fight you can have it!" she screamed. "Who looked after Father when he was ill? Whose arms did he die in? Who gave him a home? All you're after is what he left, you snake!"

Kerchiefs were torn off, plaits came undone, hair fell down, apron strings burst, and one of Pikciurniene's sleeves was ripped clean out of the arm-hole. Clogs slipped off and rolled noisily over the floor, Snekutiene's nose was bleeding, when—thank Heaven—in came neighbour Padagiene. She gasped and flung up her hands.

"Oh—dear God in Heaven! Have you gone crazy? Fighting beside a dead man? If you don't fear God, then at least think of what people will say!"

Pikciurniene silently tidied her clothing and hair, re-fastened her kerchief, then seized Padagiene's sleeve, pulled her over to the dead man and pointed to the elbow showing through the rent.

"Who did that?" she asked in a voice that made the woman's blood run cold.

Padagiene stammered something about not having noticed, about some kind of mistake.

Pikciurniene would listen to nothing, she turned and left. And Snekutiene went crying to the well to bathe her bleeding nose.

When old Karnelis was being buried, Pikciurniene took her sisters Magdė and Trude by the hand, led them to the coffin, pulled back the sheet and displayed their father's bare elbow.

"God will punish her for that!" Her deep, prophetic tones seemed to issue from underground. "Do you know we're not going to get a thing from her?"

7

Snekutiene was Pikciurniene's sister indeed—not only in blood but in spirit. The only difference was that whereas Pikciurniene gathered her property together in a pile, Snekutiene squandered it right and left.

Snekutiene wanted to live untrammelled, lie late abed, eat good things and dress richly. When she went to market she always tried to buy as many things of all kinds as she could. She did not feel that she was acting wrongly towards her husband—after all, hadn't she cause to reproach him too? What about the times when he came home drunk?

But Pikciurniene could not sleep late and take her ease. Too much to do on the farm. Labourers? Try to find any worth having! Good workers didn't come to the Pikciurnas, they wanted too much pay. And those that did come—bone lazy, one and all, stuck dummies! You had to be after every one of them with a stick all day long!

Pikciurniene often went to church, perhaps she went more than Snekutiene. But when the collection plate went round, she did not always put anything in; she did, however, watch sharply to see what others gave. And she saw all kinds of things. Some only pretended to put something in the plate. Busė was righteously indignant. "Scoundrels! Liars! Trying to deceive God!"

When Busė Pikciurniene went to market, she left home at four in the morning and was back by seven. Those labourers—if you didn't keep an eye on them they'd lie snoring till dinner-time or start thieving! . . . Try being away a day, and see how many eggs you'll find, she thought grimly. And how can you tell who's stolen them? Or the cream. You can put a mark on the jar—it makes no difference, when you come back you'll find the cream's gone down. Now, how can you afford to spend any time at the market?

Snekutiene can let things slide if she likes—and get deeper in debt every day. Money doesn't grow on trees! Why should I worry about dressing well? I'm the mistress here, whatever I wear. Thus Busė Pikciurniene reasoned. The time will come when Snekutiene will have nothing, and I shall have everything. . . .

So Pikciurniene put her money in the savings bank, and added the interest to the capital. And the capital accumulated. But unfortunately the bank paid very low interest. Evidently the sensible thing was to find where more interest could be got, to skim it off and put that into the savings bank too.

That's how money is made, she thought.

Some liked to save money, others liked to spend it. But there were quite a few, too, who wanted money for business. Pikciurniene had no need to seek such people out, they themselves came to her.

The neighbouring manor, Traiskiai, belonged to an old nobleman, von Bergeshoch. He owned the whole Stragainiai estate, consisting of a number of big farms of which Traiskiai was one. The von Bergeshoch family often stayed there for considerable periods.

Pikciurniene frequently had to pass the manor because it stood right beside the highway. She looked at it with gnawing envy. The two-storey brick house with its superstructure seemed very rich and elegant. Then there were the two brick barns and a huge hayloft—now that was a real manor! Why, even the ricks were roofed! True, there was neither fence nor gate, but who would want to hide a fine place like that? What would it look like if you put a fence round a manor? Just like some ordinary peasant's cottage! Of course, ordinary peasants don't have such fine houses, that's true, but still. . . .

And then there were the Bergeshoch young ladies—three daughters, as pretty as could be.

Yes, however one looked at it, there was plenty for Pikciurniene to envy about the von Bergeshochs. If she had had daughters she would have wanted them to look just like that.

A far cry from those Malones living on the other side of the fence, a thorn in the side of decent folks!

Then something happened that Pikciurniene could never have imagined in her wildest dreams. But in these times miracles sometimes happen even when you're wide awake.

Pikciurna came home drunk one day. Rolling drunk.

But that was not important, the really startling thing was that Herr von Bergeshoch brought Pikciurna home in his very own carriage. Yes, Herr von Bergeshoch himself! With his own noble hands he pulled Pikciurna out of the carriage and with the coachman's assistance almost carried him into the house and laid him on the bed.

"What's happened?" asked Pikciurniene, thunderstruck—although it was perfectly obvious what had happened. But she simply could not believe her eyes. Herr von Bergeshoch! . . .

"It's all right, *gnädige Frau*. Excuse me, please. It will soon pass off. He was drinking cognac," said the noble gentleman, then went out again, climbed into his carriage and drove off.

Pikciurniene stood rooted to the spot, staring at the cloud of dust which followed von Bergeshoch's carriage. She had quite forgiven her husband—after all, he had been drinking cognac with Herr von Bergeshoch himself!

Of course, von Bergeshoch didn't say *guten Tag* or *auf Wiedersehen*, she thought; he just started off as though he were talking to a labourer. But still, he did say *gnädige Frau*. And it isn't so long since he called Lithuanians swine and ragamuffins. Evidently he's seen that the Pikciurnas are different from the others.

Pikciurna's breath really did smell of cognac. He kept tossing in bed babbling: "No, no, I won't write it. . . . I can't. . . . I don't know. . . . They'll kill me! . . ."

Some days after that Busè again had to pass the Bergeshoch house on some urgent errand. The young ladies noticed her from the distance, and before she reached the gate—that is to say, the place where the gate would have stood had there been one—the *gnädige Frau* herself came out, greeted Pikciurniene and very politely invited her into the house. (Describing all this later, Pikciurniene said grandly that she was invited into the "palace.")

There the *gnädige Frau* led her into the "salong" (that was what Busè called it—the salong!) and offered her coffee and cake, while the youngest Fräulein von Bergeshoch, the prettiest of them all, waited on her mother and the guest, Busè.

After that the *gnädige Frau* herself took Busè over the whole "palace," and showed her everything. And what things there were! Furniture made of some strange wood that grew only in India or the Caucasus. And silver! And china!—Japanese or Chinese or something, it was. "I didn't dare touch it, for fear it might break."

Then she was taken over all the out-buildings. A number of labourers whom she knew were working there. Busè lifted her chin and strutted—let them see how high she had risen! But the curs only snickered.

The *gnädige Frau* herself accompanied Pikciurniene to the door (she had quite forgotten her errand). As she took leave, her hostess mentioned casually that Herr von Bergeshoch was buying some land near the Stragainiai estate and found himself short of a few thousand.

"He would pay seven or eight per cent interest if he could borrow it from a neighbour on a note of hand. . . . And the security? Our whole estate!"

The word "estate" swung Pikciurniene up to the seventh heaven. Brilliant possibilities flashed before her. . . . Who knows? Who knows? All sorts of things happen! God helps those that help themselves! . . .

Pikciurna was at first beset with doubts, but Busè shouted at him angrily.

"Dolt! If we get the first mortgage. . . You understand what that means?"

Pikciurna needed no further argument.

"Think I'm such a fool as not to understand that?"

So Pikciurniene went to the von Bergeshochs again, this time without waiting for an invitation.

8

Then all of a sudden Pikciurniene was ill. Actually, the beginning was not so sudden, she simply had a baby—her third. But for some reason she could not seem to recover. Maybe the old woman had had a hand in it, or something of that kind—who could say? It even seemed as though Pikciurniene was dying.

Her sisters Magdè and Trude took turns looking after her, and on the day when not only the doctor but the priest too came to visit her, Pikciurniene asked with sudden agitation: "Why doesn't Barbe come?"

Only Trude was in the room, and at first she thought she had heard wrong. She went up to the bed.

"What was that you said, sister?" she asked.

"I asked why Barbe doesn't come?"

"Barbe?" Trude, amazed, ran out to tell Magdè.

"You know—I think Busè's dying."

"Oh, rubbish!" cried Magdè, more surprised than alarmed. "What makes you think so?"

"She wants to make her peace, she's asking for Barbe. Just think! . . . I don't know what to do, should we go for her?"

"The wish of the dying must be fulfilled," said Magdè shaking her head, and went to fetch her sister.

When Barbe heard that Busè was dying and wanted to make peace, she was delighted; she dropped all she was doing and hurried over, putting on a clean apron and kerchief as she ran. Her anger had long evaporated. Now, when Busè was dying, perhaps. . . . No, she was afraid to let her thoughts travel any further.

"Is she still alive?" asked Barbe, running in.

Pikciurniene turned her face to the wall and said nothing.

"May the Lord God take you into his Heavenly Kingdom, Sister," said Barbe, with tears in her eyes.

"I'll get into the Kingdom of Heaven without your help, if I want to go there," snapped Pikciurniene at last, unable to keep silent any longer, and without turning, asked: "Why didn't you come before? Waiting for a special invitation?"

"How could I, when you didn't want to see me?"

"Who told you I didn't?" Busè turned and the look she gave her sister was sharp as a knife.

"Nobody. . . . But I thought. . . ." Barbe looked down.

"I thought we were sisters. When one's in trouble the others ought to help. But how did you treat me? Never showed your face. I may die. And you've never even thought you ought to make peace—"

"Yes, yes, Sister, I did think."

"—and not cherish old grudges!"

"That's all true. But you yourself—"

"Don't rake up old grudges, I tell you!"

"No, no, Sister. Let's make peace. For a long time I've prayed to God to make you see things the right way. For a long time past."

Pikciurniene sat bolt upright in bed.

"Make *me* see things the right way? So you still don't want to admit you're wrong?"

"What's past is past, Sister. Don't let's rake up old things, you said yourself. . . ." Barbe began to hedge. "I've really forgotten. . . ."

"You've forgotten what you did to us? You robbed Father in his coffin—and your conscience is easy? I want nothing but truth and justice!"

A very unpleasant moment for Barbe, this. She kept sniffing and wiping eyes that were perfectly dry, blowing her nose—and trying to think of something to say.

"Sister, dear Sister, do please lie down, you may make yourself worse. I don't want you to die because of me."

But Pikciurniene was not to be soothed.

"Don't you count on getting something when I'm dead, my dear Barbe. I'm giving away nothing and I'm leaving nothing. All my life I've saved, all my life I've gathered everything like a squirrel filling its

hole." Pikciurniene even began to weep, she was so sorry for herself. "But it wasn't to have it all taken away and squandered. You needn't look forward to me dying! Not one of you!"

Now it was Trude's turn to be angry—Trude, who always hated quarrels. But this was too much. She went up to the bed and took hold of her sister's arm.

"Busè, if you're afraid someone's going to touch your things, your clothes and all the rest of that wealth of yours, I shall go away at once. I don't want to have you lying tormenting yourself with the idea that I'm looking after you because I want what you've got. Poor Busè! There you lie, sick, and all you can think of is your belongings, you curl up round them like a snake, ready to sting anybody that comes near. Ugh!"

That had its effect. Pikciurniene said nothing more but lay quietly, wiping the sweat from her face. She rested for a little while, then remembered the duties of a hostess and called Magdè.

"Tell Marè to make coffee. The beans are on the stove. They're for holidays. . . . And take the key from under my pillow. Tell her to fry cracklings and pour eggs over them. You know how much to give her. Only watch that she doesn't eat half of it herself, she'll eat everything she sees, there's no filling her!"

At last all the sisters appeared to be at peace and sat down at the table for coffee, that is to say, two sat at table—Barbe and Magdè; Pikciurniene lay in bed, and Trude, as the youngest, ran back and forth between the table and the kitchen.

Now that Barbe had recovered from her excitement and apparently forgotten her dream of an inheritance, she began to relate all the gossip she had heard.

"Plutiene's very ill. I heard it was after having a baby," she began.

"It's always the poorest who have the worst luck!" sighed Trude. "If anyone has to be ill, it's the one who hasn't any money to pay for treatment."

"God punishes the sinners," observed Pikciurniene. "That Plutiene's a worthless good-for-nothing. And shameless! How many times I've impounded her animals for damaging my fields. If it isn't that half-dead horse of hers then it's the cow. There's no keeping them out. I've made her pay for damages plenty of times."

"You shouldn't do that, Busè dear," Trude pleaded. "After all, you're richer than they are! You should take pity on poor folks. They don't do it on purpose. You're neighbours, all sorts of things can happen. Plutiene's always ill and Pluta goes to work on other farms. I'm sure your beasts have got on to their fields too, sometimes, but they haven't impounded them."

"I'd like to see anyone try to impound my beasts! . . . But what's the good of talking to you? Of course you're on her side. You're the same sort yourself."

But Barbe had more to tell.

"I heard Pluta wants to sell the cow and take Plutiene to hospital."

"Is that so?" Pikciurniene livened up. "I hope he hasn't sold it yet; has he?"

"Oh, I do hope not!" cried Magdè. "All those children he's got—how'll he ever feed them? Send them out to beg?"

Pikciurniene, however, had her own view of things.

"That cow of theirs is a good one. Trude, give me some more coffee. Where's my husband? He could come in and have a cup too. Call him, Trude!"

Pikciurna came in, sat down at the table and drank off the cup of coffee given him at one gulp.

"Aren't you giving me anything to eat with it?" he asked timidly.

"Take what you see. There's bread and butter, and cracklings with egg. What more do you want?" snapped his wife.

Pikciurna ate rapidly, with large mouthfuls, while Pikciurniene went on talking.

"Give me some more coffee. . . . Thanks. . . . Jokubas, you seem to live in a daze, you never see or hear or know anything."

"What ought I to know now?"

"Pluta wants to sell his cow."

"His wife's ill, it's her liver," Magdè broke in. "One trouble you can stand, but they've got nothing but troubles! Maybe you could help them a bit? Lend them some money to tide them over? After all, they're neighbours."

Pikciurniene cut her short.

"There's little gain from neighbours like that. Better off without them. . . . Jokubas, you go over and find how much they want for that cow, beat them down, they'll let it go cheap, they can't help it, they'll take anything if they can get the money at once. And I've heard it's a pedigree cow and quite young. All it needs is good pasture."

Trude slipped quietly out and went straight home. Magdè too was indignant, but dared not argue with her sister. Busè might get worse again—and that would mean looking after her. No chance to get on with her own work, no chance to get home for a bit and make dinner for her husband.

"All right, I'll go over," said Pikciurna, and left.

But Barbe had not yet come to the end of her news. After waiting a moment or two, she started off again.

"And don't be too startled, Busè, I don't want to startle you. . . . Maybe I'd better not say anything. . . ."

"What? What's that?" Pikciurniene stirred in bed. "What else have you heard?"

"I didn't want to tell you because you're ill. But they say the Bergeshochs are selling the Traiskiai manor. They've bought a lot of land at Stragainiai and they're going to live there now."

"Jokub! Where's that Jokubas? Where's that good-for-nothing? He never knows anything, he never uses his head! I have to think of everything myself, everything! Trude, give me some more coffee."

Magdè poured out the coffee.

"Trude's gone. You know she never likes gossip. Now don't you get all upset, Sister, let the Bergeshochs go wherever they want. One blood-sucker the less! They won't cheat folks round about here any more. My husband made them a cart last year, but when it came to getting his money for it—he had to keep asking and asking, like a beggar, the Lord forbid—it makes you right down ashamed. They kept on putting it off and putting it off, and they haven't paid up to this very day. Are they that poor, that we've got to make them a present of it?"

"You don't understand a thing!" cried Pikciurniene angrily. "All you think of is your own silly troubles. Those who've got nothing have

nothing to worry about. What's your cart compared with—with. . . D'you think I'm going to let that rascal walk off with my money? What did I save it all up for? Nay, I'm not making him a present of it."

"Folks say, Busè, that he took your money and used it to turn a lot of peasants off their land to beg their bread. They say you helped that German landlord to squeeze our Lithuanians worse than before. . . But I oughtn't to tell you all that," added Barbe in a distressed tone, "you'll only get ill again, and I'll feel it's my fault."

"What do I care what people say! But you, of course, you'd be only too glad if Bergeshoch swallowed up my eight thousand. . . Give me some more coffee."

Pikciurniene would have told her sister a few more home truths, but she remembered that if Barbe had not come with her gossip, she, Busè, would have known nothing. Now she could make all her arrangements—and not without profit to herself.

And Pikciurniene's illness disappeared as though it had never been.

9

After this Pikciurniene seemed to change. She even talked to Malonienne sometimes. After all, she had to tell somebody all about her illness and how serious it had been.

She was kinder to her mother-in-law, too, for the old woman looked after the baby.

She bought a silk kerchief for the servant girl Marè, and gave the man a pair of white socks from her chest and the shirt which she had once let him wear for his sister's wedding.

Pikciurniene now invited her sisters to come and see her, not only when she wanted some work done, but like ordinary visitors. She still had no use for their husbands, however.

"Snekutis is as silly as a sheep," she announced. "Silbakis drinks like a fish. And that Bublīs—well, Bublīs—I"

But Trude would not go anywhere without her Bublīs. If you wanted to see Trude, Bublīs had to be invited too. And one day Bublīs began expounding his views—that people shouldn't be dull clods, they ought to stand up like men and not grovel before the rich who exploited workers and squeezed out the last drop of their sweat. You work for them, help to pile up wealth, and then they dare to say that everything belongs to them by right!

Pikciurna sat listening open-mouthed—not a thing of it all could he understand. But Pikciurniene said that Bublīs was too clever by half, she'd no use for that sort of thing and would he kindly keep his cleverness to himself

"The Holy Scriptures tell us. . ."

What they told, however, she did not say, only added: "God gives no horns to a butting cow."

Barbe for her part was delighted to be friends with her rich sister. Perhaps Busè would soon be a real landed proprietor. What if she didn't like Snekutis? It couldn't be helped. People can't all be alike. Snekutis did not lose any sleep over it, but one day, sharing a bottle with Pikciurna in Priekule, he called Busè a grab-all.

"You grab everything and keep it," he said, "and your old woman's the same! But I don't care. Just because of that I . . ." But he found no more to say.

Pikciurna, however, decided that it had been said in jest, or not even jest, perhaps, but admiration. So he gave Snekutis a friendly thump on the shoulder.

"Good man, Jonis, good man! You're just the kind I like. If it weren't for Busè . . ." And Pikciurna too stopped.

The brothers-in-law winked at each other in token of mutual understanding.

"Let's have another bottle," said Snekutis.

Pikciurna made no reply because he had no money to pay. Snekutis guessed the snag.

"Don't worry, I'll pay," he added. "Those women of ours—you know, Busè and Barbe are chips off the same block. . . . Sometimes I think what a fool I was. . . ."

But Pikciurna never learned why his brother-in-law thought himself a fool. Pikciurna had dozed off.

With the Silbakises things went differently. Once Pikciurniene was up and about, Magdè did not come again. She had no desire for the honour, and Silbakis was even more decided about it.

"I'm not going there. They can come to me if they want me."

It turned out that the Pikciurnas really did want Silbakis—as a skilled joiner. They hoped that he would charge less to relations. And after all, one is always needing something—a cart, or new wheels, a table—a thousand-and-one things.

Pikciurna appeared one day and, without even taking time to say "good day," burst out: "Marcius! Marcius! Can you make a coffin? The baby's died. Just a small coffin, it'll be. Have you boards? Some kind or other?"

Pikciurna had some boards himself, but Busè had strictly forbidden him even to mention them. After all, why saw up a good long plank for a small coffin? A carpenter would be sure to have all sorts of odds and ends of wood lying around.

"I'll find some boards," said Silbakis. "I can make an oak one."

"No, why should you? That 'ud probably cost a lot. . . . And maybe you'd make a table for me too? And I shall need a sledge for the winter."

One evening Pikciurniene herself dropped in on her sister Magdè as though just for a visit.

"Eh dear, Magdè, I'm in such trouble," she said.

"Why—what troubles can you have?"

"You can talk—you don't know how lucky you are. When you've got nothing, you've got no cares. Here I've my thread all wound ready to weave, and I simply can't find time to do it. Those girls I have are no good for anything, they can't even weave! As soon as I've got the harvest in, out they go! They can wash rags, that's all they're good for. Who's going to feed them till Christmas, I'd like to know, if they don't do a hand's turn for it? So as I was saying, there I am with all the field work starting, and my weaving's left on the loom till the autumn, getting covered with dust and dirt. I'll have all the neighbours laughing at me."

Now Magdè had little work of her own. She could do all that was needed on her tiny plot of land in a few days. Sometimes she did some dressmaking for the neighbours, but there was not much of that either.

"I can come and weave for you if you like," she offered.

That was just what Busè had been wanting.

"Of course I'd like it!" she cried gladly. "Only what shall I pay you? You can't do it for nothing. . . . And we're sisters, too. . . ."

"Oh, that's nothing to worry about," said Magdè good-naturedly, and repeated Busè's words: "After all, you're my sister, you'll treat me fairly. My cow hasn't calved yet, let me have some milk or butter now and then."

"Of course I will! Of course! I'd never refuse you that!"

So Magdè set to work. She wove for one day, a second, a third. The work went fast. When she went home she was sometimes given a pot of milk or some cabbage soup for her husband. But as for butter. . . . Pikciurniene said she was short of butter herself at the moment, later on, maybe. . .

But Magdè had no fat for the soup.

"How's that? Your husband works, you work. . . . You can see how many people I have to feed. . . . I'll give you some, you'll get it later on. You're not starving yet."

Very well. Magdè made do with what she got and continued her weaving. The days became longer, and often in the evenings she went back again to help Marè—sometimes in the fields, sometimes with feeding the pigs or with the milking.

But the day when Magdè finished the weaving Pikciurniene was in a bad temper.

"When are you going to kick out that Silbakis of yours? The land's your own, you bought it with your own money. You ought to get rid of that fool, I've told you so long ago."

Magdè was amazed. She turned and stared at Pikciurniene, wondering whether her sister had suddenly taken leave of her senses.

Apparently not. She was examining the spool. The spinning wheel was shaky and worked badly.

"What was that you said?" asked Magdè.

"You heard me all right. Have you forgotten how you came along here complaining that he was a drunkard and often drank money he hadn't yet earned?"

Quite true. Magdè remembered that there had been one time when she had said something of the kind and very much regretted it later. After all, it had happened only once or twice, and then never again. And she remembered Pikciurniene's advice at the time—to get a divorce. But what else could you expect from Pikciurniene?

"And would you leave Pikciurna just because somebody said you should?" asked Magdè.

"You let my Pikciurna alone," snapped Busè, highly offended. "My Pikciurna's a solid landowner. I don't have to go and look for work to feed him."

"Good heavens! Have you quite lost your wits!" cried Magdè, really angry now. "If you hadn't asked me yourself, I'd certainly never have come to you for work. To others, maybe, but not to you. You have to drag your Pikciurna home from the market blind drunk, everyone knows that! But when have I ever said a word about it? It's no business of mine."

"My Pikciurna can drink if he wants. He's rich enough. But you'll never be rich with your Silbakis. Mark my words—never! I told you not to marry him, but you wouldn't listen."

"I didn't listen then and I don't want to listen now. Let me alone! Got out of bed the wrong side this morning, or what? Spoiling for a quarrel? If all men were like my Marcius, it would be heaven on earth. At any rate my husband never beats me, I don't have to go running to the neighbours to hide."

Perhaps it would have been better if Magdè had left that last unsaid. Pikciurniene flew into a fury. She jumped up from her chair, overturning the spinning wheel, and set about Magdè with her fists.

"You shameless hussy! Miserable beggar!" she raved in a choked voice. "How dare you talk to me like that!"

Merciful Heavens—what a quarrel that was!

"Mangy gentry!" That was Magdè Silbakiene's parting shot.

She ran out from behind the loom, slammed the door behind her and ran off home.

"What's happened?" asked Pikciurna when he came home from the fields. "Why did Silbakiene run off like that? She went flying past as though the devil were after her."

Pikciurniene poured out her complaints.

"Just think—lazy as they can be, not a thing do they want to do, and then put on airs! If I hadn't fed them they'd have starved. Every day she took something home with her. There's gratitude for you!"

"Yes, but what happened? She wouldn't run like that for nothing," said Pikciurna. "You must have said something to her."

"Oh, indeed? If you want to know, she insulted you, the bitch! Am I to stand there meekly and hear my husband insulted?"

"D'you think I'm not man enough to stand up for myself? What did she say?" Pikciurna enquired.

When the sisters quarrelled, his name was seldom mentioned. What could have happened today?

"She called you mangy gentry."

"Oh well, Mother, can't you see that's just envy? And you took offence! I look on it as a compliment. . . ."

"Get along with you, fool! D'you want to hear what else Magdè said? That I have to drag you home drunk from market every Saturday."

"What?" Pikciurna gasped. "Well, that's what you always get for being good natured. How many times I've lent them my horses, how many times. . . ." But Pikciurna could not remember anything else he had lent the Silbakises. "There's gratitude for you!"

"You see? What did I tell you!" cried Pikciurniene with animation. "People like that—give them this and give them that, nothing but give and give—it's like pouring grain into a torn sack. But as soon as you dare to say a single little word, then up they jump in a huff and away home. . . . You know what we ought to do? Sue them!"

"Yes, Mother, that's what we'll do."

And they did.

Pikciurna donned his best jacket, put money in his pocket and went off to the learned man of Benagai—*the village clerk Siksnius*, who knew all the tricks. Siksnius had spent some years in Germany—in prison, it is true, but still he knew German well; he could not only read and write it, he could draw up a complaint and put it through.

Siksnius wrote that Pikciurna had driven the Silbakises home from market so and so many times, had lent them horses to fetch wood and for

ploughing, had given them rye, had given them barley and oats for pig-
feed, had given them seed potatoes. Pikciurniene had given them bread,
and lard, and milk, and pickled cabbage, and butter.

Pikciurna wanted to add that Magdè had been given supper to take
home to her husband, but Siksnius persuaded him to leave that out.

"It might make the gentlemen laugh."

Siksnius then reckoned it all up in money, and it came to quite a good
sum. This ingenious and well-phrased complaint, with a large number
of stamps to go with it (to pay the court tax, Siksnius explained) was then
handed in by Pikciurna.

"Now they'll have to pay us for everything! Every single thing! I
shan't let them off a groschen. The judge will support the solid farmer, not
a pauper."

The judge ruled for Pikciurna, and that day he was drunk as he had
never been before.

Pikciurniene was angry, but he cut her scolding short.

"What's it matter, Mother? The Silbakises 'ull pay for it all. If you're
rich you always come out on top."

10

It's an ungrateful world. Marè Kalvelike left the Pikciurnas, went
off and did not come back. If she alone had gone it would not have been so
bad, but the man had to go too! And all for nothing at all!

What if the mistress did tell them to get their lazy bones out of bed
earlier and work for their living! If she said it, she had reason. The sow
had overlaid one of the pigs, the best and strongest of the litter. And all
because that Marè hadn't watched her.

"What do I feed you for if you can't even keep an eye on the sow?"
Pikciurniene screamed. "Too much work? The fields? The cows? The
calves? The pigs? What d'you think you're here for? Expect to lie abed
and have me bring you your breakfast on a silver tray? I hire you to work.
When Christmas comes you'll start whining about low wages, and wanting
presents! Didn't I give you a silk kerchief? It's not every farmer's daugh-
ter has a kerchief like that. And here's your gratitude!"

"Find someone better, then," said Marè, and left.

"Good-for-nothing wench!"

When Marè left the house, Pikciurniene demanded the silk kerchief
and woven belt back again, and with her own hands snatched them out of
the girl's bundle.

Then that labourer, just as big a scoundrel, announced that if Marè
left he was going too, because without her he'd starve to death.

"So that's what's been going on! So Marè's been stealing right and left
to stuff that fellow's mouth! What people! What people!"

But she did not manage to get her presents back from the man.

"Go to hell!" he said briefly when his mistress wanted the shirt and
socks, and marched off whistling.

Pikciurniene sent the bailiff to fetch Marè back—which gave people
a good laugh, because as the bailiff went in at one door, Marè slipped out
at another.

Here it was, harvest time, work piling up and no labourers to be got.
Busè even tried putting advertisements in the paper for a servant girl.

But not a single one appeared—it was like a conspiracy against her. Bitches!

But then came events, such events that all previous joys faded to insignificance, and previous troubles became mere flea-bites, completely forgotten. The most important event was that the Traiskiai estate was put up for sale—not by the bank, but by von Bergeshoch himself; he would get more for it that way.

Since almost all Pikciurniene's spare money was in von Bergeshoch's pocket, or rather in his land bought in another, more convenient place, she now had an excellent opportunity to become a landed proprietor, although not yet the proprietor of an estate, for to buy the whole of Traiskiai—that was too big a mouthful.

Still, the Pikciurnas got a good solid slice. It was some distance from their own fields, that was true, but it lay right alongside the Benagiai-Traiskiai highway. Excellent! They could send the stock along the road, and they could drive along it themselves. A long way? Well, maybe it was. But what were labourers for? After all, she, Busė, would not have to go herself every day. And Pikciurna could go on horseback. Then he really would look a gentleman.

It could have been better, of course. Pikciurniene would really have liked to get the very middle of the Traiskiai manor. But things don't always turn out exactly the way you want. That restaurant-keeper Keilis from Priekule snapped it up right under her nose. He could pay the whole sum right down on the nail—a pretty big sum, more than Pikciurniene could produce at a moment's notice. That rascally Keilis had pushed the price up sky-high with his bidding.

Well, never mind. All the same Pikciurniene's land had more than doubled. She celebrated the occasion by buying a pedigree mare and a number of cows.

But the most important thing of all was that the Pikciurnas had got the von Bergeshoch carriage. A carriage! Pikciurniene would not have to rattle along in a cart any more. Now all she dreamed of was getting a coachman and driving to market in style. That would make the people stare. "Look at Busė Karnelike!" they would say.

However, it was still early to think of all that; the important thing at present was to find labourers, working hands.

They'll come along, she thought, they'll come running.

Incidentally, a number of labourers who had worked on the von Bergeshoch estate lived in a cottage on the section Pikciurniene had bought.

Busė was really happy. Overnight, so to speak, she had become the owner of a really big farm, almost an estate. It was a pity she had to live in that Benagiai among people like Malone and Pluta. However. . .

The day after the sale Pikciurniene went to the labourers' cottage on her new land, to make her ownership known. The labourers, however, were scattered about the yard. Luckily it was a small one, if she spoke loudly they could all hear her.

"Good morning! I am your mistress now. Do you know that?" she said, smiling.

"We wouldn't have, if you hadn't told us," grunted one of the men, but Pikciurniene did not see who it was.

This shook her self-assurance somewhat. She had expected a different reception. But never mind, Pikciurniene knew what to do.

"You'll take your orders from me now."

The labourers sat or stood, looking her up and down from head to foot, until the silence was broken by one of the women, Paleikiene.

"We knew that you'd bought the land, of course, Busè. . . . But after all, you're a peasant too, you'll treat us right."

"You be quiet!" Paleikis growled at his wife. But she took no notice. Well, what can you do with a woman?

"Be quiet yourself! I'm talking to an old friend, I am!" she snapped back. "We sat on the same bench at school. We heard our first sermon together and took our first Communion together too. . . . And then. . ."

But Pikciurniene only coughed, straightened her kerchief, pushed back a strand of hair, then smoothed it from her temples with both hands and announced: "Paleikiene, I'm not Busè to you or an old friend either. I'm your mistress. Please understand that." She let her eyes travel proudly round all the labourers, coughed again and continued: "And I don't like it when labourers get too familiar. Remember that too. What's past is gone. . . . And now here are your orders. Tomorrow we're bringing the cattle here. Paleikiene, you will look after them. Water them three times a day. I'll send a girl to do the milking and you'll help her. Understand? In the evening drive the cows home. If we leave them here, in that cow-house, see they have enough straw. There's plenty here."

"You're clean off your head!" cried Sniaukstiene, a woman with a ready tongue. "Your cows in that shed? And what about ours? Put them on the roof, or what? And our pigs under the bed? And our chickens on the trees? And want to use our straw too! Got none of your own?"

"What's that?" cried Busè in amazement. "You don't want to obey my orders? As for your cows, you're not going to keep any. I won't allow it. For your pigs you can find some sort of shelter. Hens you won't keep either. I shan't say anything about that this year, but next year there'll be an end of it. All this is going to be ploughed and sown, and I'm not having your hens all over my fields. . . . Oh, by the way, you can sell me your cows. I'll pay you whatever they're worth. You can get milk. . ." She wanted to say "at the manor" but thought better of it, and concluded: "from me."

"Of all the dirty bitches!" cried Sniaukstiene, so loudly that Sniauksta did not know how to quieten her.

"Hold your tongue, Urte!" he shouted.

"Me? Hold my tongue? Who for? Hold my tongue for her? So she can trample on me? Even the Bergeshochs didn't try anything like this! And this is one of our own, a Lithuanian. I'm not giving her my cow, not for anything, she can stand on her head before she gets it! Ugh—you skin-flint—may your riches choke you. How can the earth bear your foot! Why doesn't it open and drop you down to your master in Hell?"

"Sniaukstiene, remember who you're talking to!" said Pikciurniene threateningly.

"Who? A blood-sucker! A vampire that drinks people's blood! But don't you think we're all so simple as to let you trample on us!"

"Hold your tongue! I've never drunk your blood. I could put you all out this very day if I wanted, send you away to beg your bread. But I've too good a heart. I wouldn't do it! I'm sorry for you. I'll give you work, and pay you for it."

Pikciurniene was angry enough, of course, but she needed working hands. So she restrained herself and spoke mildly, even ingratiatingly.

"I'll overlook what you said, Sniaukstiene. You can come tomorrow and I'll give you work too. You can look after the pigs until I find a girl."

"I'm not going to work for that woman!" said Sniaukstiene obstinately. "You hear me? I'd sooner starve! Jonis, go and get us work somewhere else. We'll find a corner somewhere in the world without any Pikciurniene. Can't even talk to folks decently!"

"What are you making all the noise about?" said Sniauksta. "Of course we're going, but we'll go when it suits us, not when Pikciurniene takes it into her head to tell us." And Sniauksta lighted a cigarette, tossing the match right at Pikciurniene's feet.

She was struck dumb. And Paleikis turned to Sniauksta, saying loudly: "You know, neighbour, Pikciurniene seems to think she's bought us together with the land! Live property! Like slaves." He turned to the new mistress. "And what about us men, haven't you any orders for us, Busè dear?"

Pikciurniene went crimson, then white. The worthless good-for-nothings! Didn't want to treat her as the mistress, as the lady of the manor, even called her by her Christian name! They'd never have dared try such insolence with the Bergeshochs. Probably bowed and said "my lady." Ugh—when would she teach them their place! Yes, she could feel their contempt, she was fully aware of it, but this wasn't the time to storm at them. She had to have labourers, she needed them like the air she breathed. So she swallowed her rage.

"You won't be left without work either. Come tomorrow to. . ." The word "manor house" was on the tip of her tongue. She did so want to say: "Come to the manor house!" But the Pikciurnas' farmhouse—you could hardly call that a manor, after all. . . . A disgrace to live in such a place now.

"The master will give you your work. It's for him to say what you'll do."

What a laugh there was at that. One and all held their sides. Even the hens squawked.

No, Pikciurniene had never even dreamed it would be so difficult to deal with these labourers. She had thought she would come, give her orders, set them to work—and that was all. But how did it end? Up got Paleikis—tall and broad enough to make two of Pikciurna—up he got, hands in his trousers' pockets, strolled over to her, swaying a little as though the earth were resilient (he had once been a sailor), took one hand out of his pocket, removed his pipe from his mouth, spat heartily, replaced his pipe between his teeth and put his hand on Pikciurniene's shoulder. She felt as though it were pressing her to the ground.

"Busè, do you remember how we used to fight at school, when we were children? You always used to beat the other kids. You always liked a fight. I remember it very well."

"What's school got to do with it? Why d'you all keep harping on school?" snapped Busè.

"Keep cool! D'you know I once wanted to marry you? Yes, but d'you know why? So that once at least I could give you the hiding you deserved. But it turned out differently—because I met my good wife here. But you liked me, didn't you? Maybe you'd like me now? . . . I rather think you'd

be glad to change your Pikciurna for me. And give a barrel of honey for the change! Wouldn't you?"

Now was there ever such an impudent fellow as that Paleikis—what could you do with a boor like that! And there was his wife standing by listening. Busè only wished the earth would open and swallow them all.

"But I wouldn't change my good wife for you. She's not a hell-cat like you are. Ay! And there's one other thing you'd better remember. You've bought land in Traiskiai. How you've got hold of it is none of my business. But don't start thinking you've bought us together with the land. Bergeshoch didn't keep his contract with us, that's true. He filled his pockets here and cleared off to Stragainiai. And he'll set up his traps there for poor peasants in Benagiai and other villages round about. He'll catch them all right—he's the devil's oldest son. Especially as Pikciurniene's been so generous lending him money and scooping up as much as she can herself."

"What business is it of yours what Herr von Bergeshoch and I do?" Pikciurniene felt she had to defend the landlord as well as herself.

"Mine?" Paleikis repeated. "It's my business when more people have to hire out as labourers because of you!"

"So you want to run off?"

"I'm free as a bird. My wings aren't clipped. A poor man's bread tastes the same everywhere. But you—you'll never get away. Except to that hill!" And Paleikis jerked his head towards the cemetery.

"What nonsense are you talking? What's the cemetery got to do with it?"

"You wait a bit, I haven't finished yet. You've got no contract with us and you won't have. We don't sign contracts with the likes of you. My wife doesn't have to herd your cows. And I don't have to work for you either. You've just made a very big mistake. Get that?"

Wants to make me beg him to stop, the swine, thought Pikciurniene. The thought was sharp as a knife. No, she'd cut her tongue out first, she'd go on her knees all the way from Traiskiai to Benagiai, but plead with these worthless scamps—no, never! She had opened her mouth to say as much when Paleikis spoke again.

"We don't mind working for you," he said, "but on free hire terms, not as contracted labourers. We can come to some agreement that way. Understand, Busè? Tell your Jokubas to come and talk it over if he doesn't want this house to be empty until the autumn, and we'll see how much he's ready to pay the men and how much the women. I think you've seen our women aren't rabbits, they won't let you do as you want with them. They know their worth, too. If you treat us decently we'll treat you decently. But all you can do is puff yourself up like a turkey-cock. You'll get nowhere that way. You can't dazzle us and you can't frighten us. Tell your Pikciurna if he offers us less than we'd get, say, at the sawmills, we aren't having any. We'll work off our rent, and he won't see any more of us! And remember another thing," and Paleikis shook a large finger under Busè's very nose. "You're not going to starve us as you do your servant girls. You'll have to feed us like human beings! Do you understand that or not?"

Pikciurniene hurried home, humiliated and ashamed like a girl who had been rated, racking her brains over what to do with the labourers. Be-

fore she got there, however, she had calmed down, thought everything over very coolly and decided how to act.

But calm as she was, even very calm outwardly, Paleikis' heavy hand had left her disturbed.

"Heavens above," she sighed, "I'm not some silly girl!" But it was pleasant to dream for a moment, just a moment.

Yes, she would not have been ashamed to have a husband like Paleikis! Why hadn't he asked for her? But no! God orders all things for the best. If he had asked, who knows—perhaps her heart would have betrayed her. And then what would have happened? Could he ever have given her that firm ground under her feet she had always wanted? A good farm is like a loaded cart—both horses must pull well. But would Paleikis have pulled? No! He was of a different breed. Now Pikciurna—whatever he might be like in himself, you could get along with him.

11

Pikiurniene had two children—Jurgis and Jokubelis.

Jurgis was the older, Jokubelis the younger. Busè had had others, but they had all died.

As long as the old mother-in-law lived, it was she who brought up the children. She taught them their prayers, and taught them it was wicked to swear.

"Eh, what's that, you little rascallions, using these bad words again? You'll go to hell for that, and the devil and his imps 'ull spear you with pitchforks like frogs and toss you from cauldron to cauldron! Play ball with you!"

That was the education they got at home. At school they were taught other things. As soon as they knew their alphabet and the multiplication table, they started off with the history of the German Kaisers. It was most important to know how great Barbarossa had been, how invincible Friedrich der Grosse, and how peaceable all the Wilhelms. But really to absorb all things German, it was necessary to talk German. Absolutely necessary! At home they could do as they liked—at least, for the present. But at school! . . .

Jurgis, whose mother sometimes in her heart called him a "useless gawk," often forgot and began talking Lithuanian at school. The result was an unpleasantly close acquaintance with the cane.

When he complained at home one day and displayed his swollen palms, Pikiurna raged and said he'd go to the school and give that teacher a taste of his own stick. But Busè soon put a stop to anything like that.

"Don't be a fool! A child's got to learn his lessons and do as he's told. If he's no good for anything at home, let the teacher try and make something of him. And as for German. . . How far will you ever get with Lithuanian? As far as Priekule, maybe! And even there it's no good if you have to talk to officials."

The father was forced to agree. And the son thought it over.

The result was that Jurgis turned from a "gawk" into a real German, body and soul.

*Ja, mit Herz und Hand,
Mit dem Säbel in der Hand,
Für's Vaterland!*

When the old grandmother died, Jurgis was already a big lad and knew German well. The education of Jokubelis passed into his father's hands. And the father would say: "Always remember, my son. . ."

Incidentally, Pikciurna said "my son" only when he was a bit uplifted. But he was uplifted only when he felt safe. And he felt safe only when Busè was nowhere round about, because she always had to interfere.

"He's my son, not yours!" she would correct her husband sternly.

The father found nothing to say, so he said nothing. But when his wife was out of hearing, he would start again: "Always remember, my son, when you're on your own farm, keep your fences mended."

Pikciurna believed firmly that this injunction contained the beginning and the end of all wisdom. He had received it from his father, who had received it earlier from *his* father.

"Ruin always begins with the fences," Pikciurna continued. "Look at. . ."

However, of the neighbouring farmhouses only that of Jonis Malone had neither fence nor gate, and a roof almost falling to pieces. But since Malone kept his head above water somehow and obstinately refused to be ruined, he could not be held up as an example. So Pikciurna had to let it go at that.

Very soon, indeed, the Pikciurnas themselves had no more fences—at least, no fences surrounding the farmhouse and yard. There was still a certain amount of fencing, of course, and it was always kept in excellent repair, but when the Pikciurnas bought all their new land, the old fences began to be pulled down—at first little by little, then pretty rapidly, because huge farm buildings were going up in their place. It was a real manor! On the south side was the house—very much like the one at Traiskiai—on the north was the hayloft, and on the west, the sheds, barns, cow-house and stables. On the eastern side—the side where the Malones lived—Pikciurniene put up shelters for manure, wood and machinery. And at the end of the shelters she built a poultry-house with a special section for geese—another slap in the face for the Malones.

For although Busè's hope that Malone would be ruined had so far come to nothing, her disposition of the farm buildings was planned with an eye to possibilities. Malone's yard would make an excellent poultry-yard; there was even a pond for geese, it only needed cleaning out and deepening.

Now the Pikciurnas' farmhouse really was like a manor. No fences, only farm buildings, with gates between them on all four sides. On the Malone's side, of course, a gate was not really necessary, there was nowhere to go; but never mind, let it stand there! And not only a big gate for carts, but a wicket gate too. Let those Malones see that Pikciurniene had her eye on them!

When war broke out in 1914 Pikciurniene rejoiced. She felt that this was just what she needed. Now people would be glad to work for a crust of bread. Everyone knew that there was always hunger in wartime, and after it too!

There was only one fly in the ointment; her son Jurgis announced that he was going to volunteer for the army at once. Volunteer! He was barely nineteen, he would not be called up for some time yet.

"Think what you're doing, Jurgis," Pikciurniene cried angrily. "Are

you starving here at home? Are you badly off? What more do you want? You must have taken leave of your senses."

But Jurgis was a reticent youth, so reticent that it was sometimes hard to guess what his thoughts really were. And so it was on this occasion.

"Maybe," was all he had to say.

"D'you want to be killed like a dog out there? D'you want to have the crows pick out your eyes? D'you want . . ." Pikciurniene did not know what else to predict, still worse.

And again her son had his answer

"You said yourself, Mother, that this war would be a good thing for us!"

So Jurgis went to the front, and Pikciurniene soon forgot about him because she was busy all day—she had to take full advantage of the situation.

12

*In our fine village, Benagai,
We've birds of every kind and shape;
Jurgis like a clever fledgling
Heard the guns, flew off to gape.*

There were no other volunteers in Benagai, although it was considered a big village. It even had a poet of its own—which was more than any other village round about could boast of.

Incidentally, it was this poet who saved Jurgis from being completely forgotten. By his song about the "clever fledgling" he also saved the honour of his village, for Jurgis Pikciurna, a noble son of Benagai, was the first volunteer and—the last! Others waited more or less quietly until they were called up; when their papers came, and when they left, they ground their teeth. "These devils can never let us live in peace! What did they have to start this cursed war for?"

It never occurred to any of them that they were being called to defend their fatherland.

Busè Pikciurniene was badly frightened when she first heard gunfire at the border. For that border ran quite close, only two or three miles away. So when the guns roared, she ran out of the house and began digging a pit with her own hands.

"Marè! Ilze! Anè! Bring the grain here! I'll go and bury the clothing! If they come here they'll rob us of everything! And not a single man left in the house—nothing you can call a man!"

The grain and clothing were buried. But what could she do about the buildings and livestock? You can't bury those. But if . . . if . . . !

"Folks say there's no end of Russians there at the border, and all coming our way! Almighty God, save and preserve us!" she prayed.

She quickly harnessed horses to a cart which had been standing ready loaded, and made off with her son, leaving Pikciurna to look after the house and everything else.

Pikciurniene went no further than Priekule, however. She found such crowds and such a bustle there that she even forgot the danger.

"Look, look—Jokubelis—over there! Who's that officer?"

"Why, it's that fellow—what's his name—Bergeshoch. Didn't you recognize him?"

"Jokubelis, you should say 'Herr von Bergeshoch'! You can't call a gentleman 'that fellow.'"

"Why, he didn't hear me, did he?"

Von Bergeshoch had neither heard nor seen anything of them; he was busy shouting at a soldier who was holding an uneasy, foam-spattered horse. Pikciurniene hurried over to him.

"How do you do, *Herr Kapitän!*" she said politely.

Von Bergeshoch turned with an angry look at this woman who presumed to lower his rank.

"Was? Was? Aha! Pikciurniene? How do you do, how do you do. But I am *Oberst!*, please address me as such."

Pikciurniene felt as though the *Herr Oberst* had poured a bucket of cold water over her. She had disgraced herself! But how could she have known what rank he had?

"And so you have to go to the front too, *Herr Oberst?* But you're not a young man."

"For us officers there is no such thing as age," Herr von Bergeshoch cut her short. "And thank God for it! Do you know the age of His Excellency Herr von Hindenburg?"

No, Pikciurniene did not know. All she could remember about the general was his moustache, which she had noticed on his picture in the paper. She nodded, trying to think of something more to say.

"Well, if gentlemen like Herr von Hindenburg are going to the front, then the Russians will never come! Are you taking your horse with you?"

"No, the Russians will never come, Pikciurniene! You can make your mind easy about that. Very soon the frontier will be pushed back to the Urals. And then we shall no longer have to live as we have been living. We shall no longer be cramped and compressed as though in a vice! His Majesty the Kaiser knows what he is doing! And what we Germans undertake, we carry out thoroughly! . . . Well, *auf Wiedersehen*, I'm in a hurry."

Where the Urals were Pikciurniene did not know, so she decided that it must be a very long way off. A weight seemed to roll off her heart. If that was the way things were, she could very well return home.

She badly wanted to boast to von Bergeshoch about her son who had volunteered, but he had already turned his back and was walking towards the station. Pikciurniene hurried to Balas' restaurant—she might find other people she knew there.

She did.

There sat Kojelis and Staigys. What, was Staigys going to the front too? He had two fingers missing on his right hand! But no, he was simply seeing his brother off. And who was that—not Paleikis! Yes, Paleikis! How had he got here? Pikciurniene had not seen him since he left the estate.

She was very anxious to hear what they were talking about, so she edged closer, trying to look as though she were wanting to buy something. And she heard:

"What's it all got to do with us Lithuanians?" said Kojelis. "What fatherland have we got? If you haven't the right to talk Lithuanian when you're living in your own land, if you aren't even allowed to call yourself Lithuanian, where's your fatherland? I suppose it's all going to start again, the way it was when we were serving our time in the army. Make a fool of you to amuse the others. Or order you to scrub the barrack floor with

a toothbrush. . . . And all because you've got *Litauer* on your papers. But we've got to go all the same. You may escape getting killed by the enemy, but you won't escape the German bullet marked 'deserter' if you try to run away."

"That's true enough," said Staigys' brother. "But why should I have to go and fight other people's quarrels? What's he got to do with me, that Austrian archduke?"

"That's not what it's really all about, lad. Talk sense!" Paleikis laughed scornfully. "We've got too many generals running about looking for something to do. And it's not only work they want, it's glory too. They're getting bored with hanging round barracks. And then there's the Krupp factories—what about them? They've got so many guns, they've no place to keep them."

"Going rusty for want of use," grinned Staigys. "And they may get out of date too!"

"And then there's new colonies wanted," Paleikis went on. "Well, come on, mates. We'll go and get our rifles, and then it'll be time to think about whom we'll fire them at!"

"Traitors!" howled Pikciurniene, seizing Jokubelis' sleeve. "Call yourselves soldiers? And there's my son. . . ."

A burst of laughter from four throats followed Pikciurniene as she ran out, her hands up to her ears.

But all the papers were shouting: "*Der König rief, und alle, alle kamen!*" and printing pictures of soldiers raring to be up and at 'em.

The first wartime autumn did not promise much. Everybody was saying it could not last long, it would all be over by Christmas. The papers said that, so did the German officers. And if there was anybody who still did not believe it, he need only go to the fortune-teller in the town, and she told him exactly the same thing.

So there you are, Mrs. Pikciurniene, Busè laughed sourly at herself. The war'll be over by Christmas. And it'll end with a great victory. All the prices 'ull go down. What are you going to do then?

Weeks passed into months, and when she wanted to buy rice, sugar or currants, the shopkeeper refused to give them to her, not for any money. What times!

The next year, however, things were better. Farm produce began going up. Money was reckoned in hundreds, in thousands.

Then . . . then came golden days. When she drove into town, people would come running after the cart: "Have you any butter? Have you any milk? Have you any eggs? Have you any bread? Have you. . . ." You could even swindle them. Nobody ever tasted the butter, for instance, to see if it was good or not, whether it was fresh or over-salted. . . . You could easily mix curds with it, or mashed potatoes. Who would stop to argue? And the prices! . . .

There were plenty of working hands to be got, too. Some of her labourers even had papers marked *Ausländer*. They had a gendarme in charge of them, and had no right either to return home or to change their place of residence. And if one of them showed the faintest sign of dissatisfaction, the gendarme was right there by him in a minute.

Pikciurniene got four French prisoners-of-war. And now she was really angry with her son for joining the army when there was no need. If

Jurgis had been at home, he would have been given a gun and told to guard the prisoners. Then the assignment could have been made permanent, and he would have served at home till the end of the war. Whereas now they had sent a disabled soldier from town, and he had to be given good food, a room and clean bedding. Had Jurgis been at home there would have been no need to feed a lazy rascal like that. If he'd only made himself useful, at least! But no, not a thing would he touch. He'd go to the field with the prisoners, sit there smoking, and even—think of it, was he a bit soft, a zany, or what?—even gave the prisoners cigarettes, talked to them, laughed with them!

But that was not the whole of it. He actually dared to give orders to her—her, Pikciurniene! Told her how she was to feed the prisoners! But she wasn't the woman to stand for that.

"Oh no, my dear *Herr Rotold!*" she said. "I have my regulations from headquarters. Look!" and she flourished a paper under his nose. "Here it is, all down in black and white—what's proper for the prisoners and what isn't!"

"Very good!" Rotold agreed. "But according to the instructions they are not supposed to work such hours—from early morning to night."

Pikciurniene stood her ground. And then that rascally guard—imagine it!—ordered the prisoners to work eight hours and not a minute over.

No, it was too much—that drone had gone clean off his head, he'd got a bit above himself! He stood by the door of the closet where the prisoners slept, watch in hand, waiting until the hand reached the exact minute.

"Lord God Almighty! Get them up! Are you going to let them sleep till dinner-time?" cried Pikciurniene, losing patience. "They still have to wash and dress, and they take five hours to eat."

When they were working, that toad would stand there again with his watch in his hand, to make sure that they didn't work an extra minute.

"But *Herr Rotold*, we'll go bankrupt this way!" Pikciurniene turned to pleading.

"*Frau Pikciurniene*, it is according to regulations."

Pikciurniene made a trip to town and, of course, it bore fruit. A few days later she had five prisoners and another guard.

Eh dear me, she thought, it's fight here and fight there, and grease people's palms all round if you want to make a living. . . . That Jokubelis is just a whelp yet. If he were a few years older, now, he could get a rifle and guard the prisoners.

Yes, Jokubelis was still going to school, and there he learned to feel that he was *ein echter Deutscher*. A most patriotic song helped to convince him of it.

*Ich bin ein Preusse,
Kennt ihr meine Farben?
Die Fahne schwebt
Mir schwarzweissrot voran.*

At home, however, thanks to his father, he sang the same song in Lithuanian.

*I am a Prussian
Do you know me?
My banner is black and white!*

There was a certain discrepancy—in German there were three colours, in Lithuanian only two. H'm. But if that was the way it was sung, then it must be right, thought Jokubelis.

He learned to recite verses too. For example: *Deutschland mein Deutschland, du darfst nicht untergehen!* And others of the same kind. One day he brought the teacher twenty-five silver marks for the war loan. His father had given it to him when Busè was not about.

"Take it," he said, "we've got to win the war. And if we don't give anything, we won't!"

One might have thought, from the look on his face, that the only thing still needed for victory was that twenty-five marks.

Once Jokubelis even gathered stinging nettles under the fence for the war. His mother allowed him to take stinging nettles out of the farm—they did not have to be sown or reaped.

13

In the second year of the war Bublīs was called up.

"If things get too hard, go to the Staigysēs," he told Trude when he left. "I've spoken to them. And when I come back, dear, you'll see how different everything will be."

Trude Bublīene, left alone, did not at first know where to turn or how to occupy herself. The world seemed very dark, she could see no ray of light anywhere. Not one of her sisters was alone like she was.

Magdè was in difficult straits, that was true, but she had her husband at home with her. It's always easier to bear things together. And she had children—two daughters and a son. Silbakis found plenty of jobs, besides looking after his farm.

"One good thing is that at least Silbakis gets his food when he goes out to work," Magdè said. "What he earns in a week won't buy us a pound of butter! And we have to buy it. We've only one cow and it doesn't give milk all the year round at that."

When Barbe's son was called up, she took to her bed. She said she wanted nothing, she only wanted to die. She was tired of such a life. Her pride, her only joy, her best beloved child was being driven to the slaughter! And those left at home! . . . Better not talk about them.

So Barbe lay in bed weeping and groaning. There was no doctor in Priekule, he had left for the front, and it was a long way to the nearest town. Trude could not tell what ailed her sister. Barbe said she had an ache here and a pain there, and she did not want to eat, she was sure that she could not force anything down.

"But I ought to eat all the same," she added, "or I shall lose all my strength."

So she ate, and ate heartily. Trude had to bake buns and see they were sweet enough. Trude had to buy meat and see it was really good. Trude had to find fish—and freshly caught. Trude had to get hold of vegetables, and dried fruit, and real coffee.

"Soup made of dried fruit with dumplings—how good that is, and how nourishing!" Barbe's tears began to dry.

"Barbe dear," Trude chided her gently, "if Busè ate all this I wouldn't be surprised. But you ought to remember that this is wartime, soon

the reserves will give out. I had to go round all the shops today before I could find coffee, and the shopkeeper told me I'd got the very last dried fruit."

"Do you grudge a little trouble to get food for your sick sister?" asked Barbe, in a dudgeon. "Busè indeed! Who's there to stop her eating anything she wants? Oh, by the way, do you know what she suggested? That I should sell her our farm. What do you think of that?"

"Barbe, open your eyes and look at what Busè's about; and then decide."

"Why, God Himself's helping her! Trude! Trude dear! I know you envy her. And your husband envies everybody!"

"No, Barbe! I haven't sunk to envying her yet! Tell me—the way our sister lives, is it anything to be proud of?"

"What's being proud got to do with it? She was the first to talk of buying our land, I'd never have thought of it! I was driving to Priekule with her in her carriage not long ago. And suddenly she said to me: 'Why do you keep on toiling and moiling? Sell me that estate of yours, you'll not regret it!' Well, what do you say to that?"

"Oh, of course! And so she thinks you'll go running to sell her your farm now? But I'm not surprised at her. She'd swallow up the whole of Benagai if she could! I heard she'd been talking to the Silbakises about buying their land too. But Silbakis just laughed and said he wasn't going to jump into her net. You see! And you want to let yourself get pulled in. But I don't understand what she wants with Silbakis' land. It's only three or four acres, wedged in between other people's fields. No room to move on it."

"Why talk about Silbakis? We've got much more!" Barbe boasted.

"Yes, of course, your land's better for her. But think where her fields are, and yours. Of course, if there wasn't Pluta's land in between. . . . Pluta. . . . Pluta. . . . Just a minute, I think I see what the idea is. Pikciurniene wants to set a trap for Pluta! Barbe, if you've a scrap of decent feeling, you won't help her!"

Barbe, however, ignored her sister's last words.

"If she paid a good price," Barbe mused, "I might consider selling."

"I see you've really got it fixed in your head."

"She said we could either go and live in town, or stop here if we wanted. She'd give us maintenance as long as we lived. That wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

"And what does your husband say to it?"

"Jonis? He doesn't know himself what he wants! Sometimes he says: 'Maybe it would be a good thing! There will be less work. And we won't have to mend the fences and the roofs,' and then he turns round and says: 'No, I'm not going to jump into her mouth!'"

"Barbe, Barbe, you'll soon be an old woman and you haven't learned a scrap of sense yet! What will your children do?"

"I can't always be thinking of them! Marè's of an age to marry, and my Kriziukas is sickly. Pikciurniene says it might be possible to get him taken in at some invalid home."

"Well, have it your own way."

That was the end of it. Snekutiene returned to her eternal obsession.

"Trude dear, what can you give me to eat? If only you'd make me some pancakes! I'm getting quite weak!"

"You know, Barbe, I do think you'd feel much better if you got up

a bit. If you keep on stopping in bed you really will get weak, you may even lose the use of your legs altogether."

"It's easy for you to talk!" snorted Barbe in a huff. "I'd have got up long ago if I could! O-o-oh! What a pain—what a pain in my stomach!"

"Again? It's from eating too many sweet things!"

Trude got thin and worn looking after her invalid sister, while the invalid waxed plump. But when neither Snekutis' wages nor any other money coming in was enough to satisfy Barbe's demands for dainties and she asked Trude to be a kind sister and lend her some, Trude's patience came to an end, she left and did not come back.

Barbe wept, Barbe raged, and then at last Barbe rose and went to Pikciurniene.

Pluta of Benagai was at the front too, Plutiene was alone with her six children, and expecting a seventh.

The seventh came, leaving her very ill; there was not only want in the house—stark hunger looked out of the frightened eyes of the children.

Trude brought them all she had, but that was little enough.

"What do you think—shall I ask Pikciurniene for some milk?" Plutiene asked her. "She promised to let me have some if I needed it."

"And how much has she given you?" asked Trude. "None? And haven't you ever needed it up to now?"

"Yes. . . ."

Trude brought her goat over to Plutiene's house.

"Let it graze by the fence," she said. "There'll be a little milk for the smaller ones, anyhow. And when you get better we may manage to buy a cow for the two of us. We'll scrape up the money somehow."

"If my calf hadn't died, we'd have milk," sighed Plutiene.

"Now don't you worry, you just get well again. When you're on your feet, everything will be all right."

"I feel as though I'd never be well again. Oh dear, oh dear, I'm no good for anything!" Plutiene wept.

Trude scolded her, but she could hardly restrain her own tears. She was sorry for the children who rarely left their sick mother's bedside.

"When your husband comes home again, everything will be quite different," Trude comforted her. "Now don't cry! I'll help you all I can, things'll be easier when we face them together. After all, the war won't last for ever!"

Trude herself was in need of help and support. But she said nothing. Amid all the grief of the war one joy had come to her—she was going to have a baby.

She had to think seriously about her situation. So she wrote a letter to her sister Busè.

"Dear Sister," she wrote. "I cannot wait any longer. I need money. You know that I am quite alone. I am not writing this to make you feel sorry for me, I know you have no use for such nonsense. And I do not want it. But I do ask you, please, to return my money, I have urgent need of it. I do not ask for interest, although after all these years it would come to a good sum. I hope you will understand me and send the money as soon as possible. It should not be difficult now with money so cheap. I make you a present of the chest."

She sent the letter by post, registered, although the post-office was over four times as far away as the Pikciurna house.

Two days later Trude saw Pikciurna's labourer come into the yard bringing the chest.

"Pikciurniene sent you this chest. Help me get it off the cart," said the man.

"No, Petras, take it back," said Trude. "I don't want that chest! Look at it! All dirty and knocked about! And one of the legs broken off, too!"

"It's been lying about in the shed. You know, where the hens are. . . . Pikciurniene said she was making you a present of it. I thought to myself—a nice kind of present! But she told me to bring it."

"Take it back, Petras, and tell Pikciurniene she can put it in her best room, opposite the big mirror."

Petras laughed; he thought Trude was joking.

"It was a really good chest once."

"Yes, it was—once."

Petras had not been gone long when Pikciurniene came flying in. She burst into the house and halted, arms akimbo, eyes blazing. She looked as though she might set about her sister with her fists at any moment.

Trude laughed ironically.

"Well, Busè dear, what's brought you here in such a hurry? You're all out of breath! There was no need to hurry like that! What—you'd forgotten? Of course, that's quite natural. You've so many other things to think about."

"Why didn't you take the chest, I want to know?" cried Pikciurniene, with a thump of her fist on the table. "How dare you send it back?"

"Why, Busè, I'd made you a present of it. I don't take my presents back."

"I don't need your presents! Take it back, I tell you!"

"And I tell you, you can't have understood my letter. I don't want the chest, I want my money."

"What money? When have you ever given me any money? You bit of dirt—when are you going to leave me in peace?"

"Sister dear, you must be getting old, you're losing your memory. Who took half of my portion?"

"How do I know? Maybe Father took it. Took it and drank it. Ask him, don't ask me!"

"So that's it, is it? Busè! Busè!"

"Busè! Busè!" Pikciurniene mocked her. "Is it my fault if you haven't two groschen to rub together? Is it my fault if you went and married a beggar, with hardly a pair of trousers to call his own? What have you done with your dowry?"

Up to now Trude had kept up a half-jesting tone, but now she became really angry.

"I rather think, Busè, I'm of age and can do as I like with my own money. What business is it of yours? I've never taken other people's money to make myself a big landowner, and never wanted to. Give me back my money, and our paths need never cross again."

"Where's the proof that you ever gave me any money? Where are my notes of hand? Put them down there on the table and I'll give you your money at once."

"Pikciurniene, you're quite shameless! Father was always thoughtless, all he could do was drink and get into debt. It was because he was thought-

less he had to sell the farm, it was because he was thoughtless he gave you fifteen hundred marks, Barbe twelve hundred and Magdè and me only eight hundred each. If he'd thought even for a moment, he'd never have taken another four hundred from me and given it to you. But you—you're not thoughtless. You know very well what you're doing, you can think and you can scheme. . . . But haven't you any conscience at all?"

Busè Pikciurniene smiled mockingly.

"Do you know what's written in the Holy Scriptures, Bublione? 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.' So there you are! If you had anything of your own, if I could see what you wanted the money for—say, to buy a farm—well, I might give it you. But give it you for nothing? No! What do you want it for? You're all alone, you can live like a lady without any troubles or cares, without having to toil and moil. What d'you need any more money for? For the lottery? Nay, there isn't going to be any playing the lottery. . . . Maybe you want to start acting like Barbe? She'll soon be off that farm of hers, you'll see!"

"Oh, so that's it? You've swallowed up the Snekutises too?"

"If I want to swallow them, down they go, and I shan't ask your permission!"

"Yes—you know how to get people in your web. If you've even got Barbe, what can I expect?"

"Don't expect anything out of me! I give nothing to spongers! If you had anything of your own I'd give you something, but since you haven't—not a thing."

"Pikciurniene, it's my own I'm asking for, not yours."

"Go and sue me, then."

Trude Bublione opened the door as wide as it would go

"Pikciurniene, you're a liar, a swindler and a thief! You understand me? And now get out, don't foul the air of my clean room! Phew, how it stinks!"

Bublione opened the window as though the room actually needed airing.

"I don't go about suing people. And you're not worth my taking you to court, swindler and thief that you are. . . . Why don't you go? Want to hear some more? Out with you!"

Pikciurniene was petrified. It was not the first time she had heard such things, but to be called "swindler" by the gentle Trude!

"You hussy, you bit of dirt!" she howled. "Picked a time to abuse me when there are no witnesses!"

"That's just to be going on with. It's not much, but never mind that. There'll be more to come—payment for all your vileness. . . . Well, why don't you go? Do I have to take a broom to you?"

Whether it was the last words that took effect, or for some other reason, Pikciurniene at last turned to leave. As she crossed the threshold she felt for the door to slam it thunderously behind her, but even this she could not manage.

That closed Trude's account with her sister Pikciurniene.

The next morning she borrowed Plutiene's cart, took the half-grown pig to market and sold it.

But there was not enough money for a cow, all the same.

So there was no hope of getting even depreciated money from Pikciurniene. And Trude had given Plutiene almost all she had. With a sudden shock she realized that she had nothing left. She had nothing even for herself, let alone for the child to which she was preparing to give life.

The pig was sold, but there was no chance to buy a cow for Plutiene. All the money went for doctors and medicines. The goat was needed to give milk for Plutiene's children. Nearly all the poultry had been eaten, and Plutiene ought to have nourishing food. But at least she did seem to be a little stronger. She could look after her meagre house-keeping and the children. And when Trude gave birth, she could take the baby and go and live with Plutiene and help her so far as she was able. Because after all, Plutiene was still very far from well.

Yes, she's still weak, thought Trude, looking about her own bare room. But what about me? What am I going to do?

She herself was badly in need of help now. But where could she find it? She could not ask anything of Plutiene. The neighbours? The Raudonises for whom she worked? But they were rich farmers! You couldn't go to Raudonise and say: "Mistress, you know how things are with me. Will you. . . ?" Oh no! Not to be thought of, even! Who, then? The person closest to her, and living closest was her sister Barbe. What if she went there? Trude did not expect very much from her. But after all, she had never asked her for help before. Maybe Barbe would not have refused. But Trude had never needed anything. On the contrary, it was she who had always helped Barbe. Look how often she had lent her money! Small sums, it was true, but if you added them all up it would come to quite a lot. Not that Trude would ever add up old debts or ask for them to be paid. She simply felt that her sister might help her a bit in this most difficult moment of her life. Of course she would help! After all, a sister was a sister!

Trude put on a clean apron and a white kerchief, latched the door and went to Barbe.

If only she was at home!

She was. She was sitting by the table drinking coffee and eating sweet buns bought at the market. She frowned when she saw her sister enter, and Trude almost changed her mind. But Barbe could always put on the expression she wanted to show, and she quickly assumed a smile.

"So you've remembered me at last, Sister?" she said affectionately, wiping her mouth. "It's a long time since you've been here. You've quite forgotten me. . . . No time for your sister. So taken up with that Plutiene, sitting in her pocket all the time. What does she do for you, I wonder, that you can't be away from her a moment? I was very ill again the other day, I thought I was dying. I sent Kriziukas to fetch you, but he came back and said nobody was at home. Then he went to Magdè, but he didn't find her either. . . . Well, what's to be done if all my sisters are like that! When you need help, not one of them's there! They all forget it's wartime! And the priest said in his sermon that everyone must help soldiers' mothers. . . . I've had a letter from Marcelis, he's still all right, God be praised. But how do I know what may happen to him tomorrow? There are terrible battles over there in that France! He writes: 'I shall never come

back alive.' Oh, dear God in Heaven! You don't know how fortunate you are not to have any children!"

"But Barbe, you know how I'm left!" Trude broke in at last, cutting short the flood of complaints.

"Why, what's wrong with you? You're strong and healthy! What have you to grumble about?"

"And you? Your husband's at home—and still you complain? Remember what I've got before me. . . . I'm going to have a baby. . . ."

"Oh well—small children bring small troubles! But what on earth were you thinking of? To have a child at your age! If you wanted children, you ought to have thought of it earlier on, not now! A child needs all sorts of things—milk, and this and that. . . . You haven't given your goat to Plutiene, have you?"

"No, I put it out to pasture, because. . ."

"There you are, to pasture! I'd have pasture enough for a goat like that, you could have brought it here. There's whole ditches full of willows. You could have paid me a little and your goat could have browsed all the summer. But people like you always do things upside-down! Give everything away to strangers so that there's nothing left for your own!"

"But Barbe, you know why, I. . ."

"What was I going to say? Yes. . . see you don't find yourself in your grave. To have a child at your age, and when you're all alone, too! I don't know who's going to help you. How'll you get a doctor when there's none in Priekule? Will you get one from town? Have you any idea how much that'll cost? How'll you pay for it? D'you think the village council 'ull pay for it? Or the district? Try them! And a doctor you'll have to have. If you send for the midwife, she'll say: 'I'm not going without a doctor.' You can be sure of that. And these old women in the village—better have nothing to do with them. All they can do is hurry you into the grave. . . . Eh dear me, you don't know how I've cried over you! I was talking to Pikciurniene the other day, and do you know what she said? 'Serve her right! She's been living with her husband without a proper wedding, without going to church. And her child'll be a bastard. Better if it didn't live.' Maybe she's right. . . . Why couldn't you go to church and let the priest marry you? Of course it's none of my business and I say nothing. And my Jonis is the same. 'Why do folks have to poke their noses into what isn't their business?' he always says. 'They'd do better to look at their own conduct!' And I say the same, but you can't shut people's mouths!"

"Barbe, do for goodness' sake stop talking all this nonsense!" cried Trude, losing patience. "I came to you as a sister, to ask you to help me, and not to listen to sermons. All this you say—I know it by heart, I've heard it from all of you, it goes in one ear and out at the other."

"And haven't you need of the people you flout? You say you need help. But what help can I give you? Have I any horses? Have I hired men I can send you? Dear God, whatever's put it into your head to come to me, when I can hardly keep on my feet myself! You know quite well I've been poorly ever since they took my Marcelis to the war! . . ."

"Barbe, all I wanted was that you or Marè should come and spend the nights with me for a week or two. So that I'm not all alone in the house. So that there's somebody to give me a drink at least if I'm ill."

"Oh, dear God in Heaven! But I've already told you—Marè! . . . Marè's not at home. Sometimes she comes, sometimes she doesn't. And me? I'm afraid to go. What if God punishes you and you die, and I have to see it? I'd die myself of fright! Why don't you go to Plutiene?"

"Good-bye!" said Trude and rose to go.

"Wait a bit, wait a bit, don't be in such a hurry! Have a cup of coffee. You never come to see me. . . ."

"I have no time, Sister."

"Wait a minute—what was it I was wanting to ask you?"

Trude closed the door behind her.

Should she go to Magdè? But Magdè Silbakiene lived a long way off. So Trude went back home again despondently.

There she found Staigiene.

No, Trude had not forgotten the Staigyses. But when you have near relations, you're ashamed to go to strangers for help. Staigiene might start talk going about her sisters, and Trude did not want to have people speaking ill of them. Better for nobody to know how Barbe had shown herself up today. Of course it was no use trying to hide what Busè was like, she was too well known. But people probably still thought Barbe a decent, kind-hearted woman. Let them go on thinking it.

"Trude! Dear! I've been waiting ages for you! Can't you come and stay with me a bit? Mother's very ill. And you've got a good hand with sick people. If you could stop with her when we're out in the fields?" Staigiene spoke with such warm sincerity and looked her in the eyes with such real affection that Trude could not possibly suspect that she was hiding anything, or had come for any other reason.

It turned out, however, that Mother Staigiene was not so weak as all that. She could get about, do odd jobs, and clean up the room which Staigys had just whitewashed. When she saw Trude, she took both her hands, glanced down, then smiled with maternal affection.

"Let's live quietly and comfortably a week or two—until a third comes to keep us awake!"

Before Trude had time to look round, Staigiene had put up white curtains at the window, spread fresh soft straw for a mattress, taken the last clean pillow-case saved for emergencies out of her chest, and made up the bed. On the floor she put a runner—not new, but freshly washed, and a vase of carnations on the table.

"Well, here we are, all grand for the visitor," she joked.

Trude burst into tears. She was not accustomed to kindness. Only Jurgis had been kind to her, but he was far away. She could not even tell him that soon—soon. . . .

Suddenly she felt bad. She said nothing, but Staigiene saw for herself, and hurried to finish tidying up.

One after the other, all her sister's unfeeling, ominous words came back to her. The end, Trude did not want to die. But it was not only the fear of death that weighed her down—she could not forget the taunt cast at her that all these years she had been "clever enough to keep clear." If anybody else had told her what her sister Barbe was like, what a dirty mind she had, Trude would never have believed it!

Staigiene thought Trude was afraid of the pain, and tried to comfort her as best she could. Afraid? What was there to be afraid of? How old was she? Well, then! Nothing to worry about!

"My sister Urniene was forty-six when she had a son. And everything went off quite all right! The baby was as strong as could be and the mother was fine! And now she's got a grand boy growing up. . . . That's the way we all started, first we tortured our mothers and then we made them happy. . . . My mother was glad when she had me, and yours when she had you, although sometimes they had to slap us, you can't get along without that either. . . ."

Trude smiled, and Staigiene felt easier.

"Everything's going to be all right! You'll see!"

"I've got a little money put by for the midwife," said Trude. "But if a doctor's needed. . ."

"I told you not to worry!"

Staigiene saw Trude into bed, then climbed up to the attic for a cradle; this too she decorated to the best of her powers.

When the pains began, Staigys went for the midwife. She turned out to be a very decent, sensible woman. She managed without any doctor, waited for a little while to see that everything was all right, and left only when she saw that the mother was in good hands and in no danger, and the son healthy and sleeping soundly.

"Didn't I tell you everything would be all right?" Staigiene triumphed. "Well, children, come in and look at the new baby," she went on, turning towards the door where her own children were peeping in. "No, don't kiss him, don't kiss him! You can just stroke his head. . . . That's the way! And for a treat—here's something for each of you! Now, run out and mind the geese!"

She distributed pieces of sugar and hunks of bun, and shooed them all out of the room.

"Well, and what would you like, Mother?"

Yes, Trude Bubliene was a mother! She had not only given birth, she herself had been born afresh, she had become a different person with new emotions which she had never felt or even dreamed of before. For an instant her thoughts turned to her sisters—to Pikciurniene and Snekutiene; they were mothers too, they too ought to have been born afresh! . . .

No—she wanted nothing but rest. She was so indescribably happy! She wanted to listen to the breathing of her strong sturdy son. From the corner of her eye the mother saw the tiny fist that had escaped from the coverings. She had not had a really good look at his little face yet. But never mind, she would be able to look her fill. . . . Something rose in Trude's throat.

"Etmike, come here. . . ."

"You want to whisper something?"

But Trude had nothing to whisper. She put her arms round Staigiene and hugged her.

"You mustn't make quick movements! You need a scolding!"

Staigiene kissed Trude and went out quickly to hide her own tears.

All the gossips in Benagaiai had their heads together. Trude Bubliene had a baby—just think of that, now! But the baby wasn't the main thing—after all she had a lawful husband, you couldn't deny it! The question was—would she have it christened?

No, Bubliene's child was not christened.

It was something unheard-of in Benagiai! In a village where you had to pass the church whatever road you took, such a God-fearing village with such a pious congregation—to have a thing like that! Of course it was true, people remembered, once upon a time in Benagiai—no, it was in Traiskiai—some farm hand or day-labourer, he'd gone away long ago thank God, some fellow like that had refused to christen a baby. But it



didn't matter because when he wasn't at home his wife had slipped out secretly to the church and got the child christened just the same. But there was Trude, able to do as she liked—for her husband was away at the front—Trude herself wanting to bring her child up a heathen! And where? In Benagiai! That was a bit too much, something had to be done!

So something was done.

The first thing was that when Trude went to the district office to register the child, the official, who knew the answer he would get, asked gravely: "And when are you going to christen Viktoras?"

Trude guessed that he was trying to draw her into an argument, which was just the thing she wanted to avoid. Why quarrel? What good would that do? She would never convince the man or make him look at things more sensibly

"We'll have to see," she answered evasively.

The official laughed nastily.

"I rather think you can't christen him even if you want to. You weren't married in church, you only registered here, isn't that right?"

Trude had not even known which children could be christened and which couldn't. But now she knew. Good!

"Then do you consider, Sir," she said, "that your registration is less valid than that of the church?"

"No, no! I only wanted to say. . ."

A little later the pastor called on Trude. The pastor himself, now what do you think of that!

Again came the same question.

Trude had her answer ready.

"But how can you christen my child when we were not married in church?"

Yes, that was true, such children were not usually christened. But

nevertheless the pastor would be compassionate. He was not one of those who closed the doors of the church against sinners. He would never do that. Was not one lost sheep dearer to Jesus Christ than ninety-nine of the righteous?

"But then why does the state authorize civil marriages if they make people criminals?" Trude wanted to know.

Aha, so that was her talk, was it? But the pastor was not one to be caught.

"If life could be lived without religion, all the churches would have been closed long ago! There are some today who would like to destroy the Holy Church. Like your husband! But the church stands and it will continue to stand, because people need it."

"Very good, Your Reverence, let it stand. I leave the church alone, let it leave me alone."

"I came to you in answer to the urgent plea of your sister."

"A-ah! Which sister?"

"How can you ask! Who is the wisest of them all? Mrs. Pikciurniene came to me in tears. . . ."

"She needn't cry over me and my child. Let her keep her tears for herself, for her vileness, her disgusting greed, her. . ."

"Do not dare to slander your sister! She is a faithful daughter of the church! Do you know how much she gives to the church, how much she gives for the poor? No! You know nothing!"

"Soap bubbles look very pretty until you get close, Your Reverence! And do you know how many poor people she abuses and swindles, right here in Benagai? No! Of that *you* know nothing! Don't worry, she squeezes a hundred times more out of the poor than she ever gives you for them!"

"Slander! Lies and slander! She told me herself. . . . She wept over the lost sheep. Think—think well and ponder. What are you doing? About the sins of your husband I say nothing. He is at the front, he is defending the fatherland—unless he's deserted, of course. . . . But the faithful are outraged, they turn their faces from you. Each one says in the words of the psalmist: 'I will not consort with the ungodly!' You, the daughter of such God-fearing parents, how can you. . . ?"

"Excuse me, please, Your Reverence, the baby's crying."

"Trude Bublione! Your sin cries to Heaven for retribution! You will answer before God's judgement seat for the perdition of your child!"

She soon came to feel all that had been promised her. She was denounced from the pulpit as an apostate. All true Christians should know what a blind unbeliever lived among them.

"Pray for her, my children! Kneel and pray to the Almighty that He may not destroy us with fire and brimstone like Sodom and Gomorrah!"

Among the congregation in church that day was not only Busè Pikciurniene, but Barbe Snekutiene, rejoicing to be rid at last of their unbelieving sister. And Barbe saw with her own eyes how Busè wept. At least, Busè never once removed her handkerchief from her eyes. Kneeling, she swayed back and forward. She let all see how she mourned the lost soul of her sister, how she prayed for her sister's repentance, how she pleaded with God not to bring down fire and brimstone on Benagai.

After the service she stood by the church door and gave her hand to all who wished to express their sympathy.

But for some reason, whether people were dense or just didn't understand how they ought to behave—there seemed to be very few of these sympathizers. So Busė Pikciurniene, thoroughly offended,—Barbe watched it all—climbed into her carriage and rolled home without even waiting to take leave of the pastor.

15

"Revolution in Russia?" gasped Pikciurniene, astonished. "Why, have they gone crazy, or what?"

She comforted herself, however, with the thought that Russia was not at her door, it was far away to the east. . . . But make peace with Russia? What for? Why didn't the Kaiser go and thrash those revolutionaries? Oh, he needed to free his hands for fighting in the west, did he? Aha! The war wasn't ending yet, then? No? No! And afterwards there'd be those Reds to fight!

But they can never let people alone to live quietly! There was nothing in the papers about peace, but all the same talk started going round that the war was ending. And before Pikciurniene had time to collect her thoughts it actually did end. And brought unexpected results. Jurgis did not return, and Kaiser Wilhelm fled to Holland! Then someone set the rumour going that "the tassel of the German Michel's night cap," in other words the narrow strip of land north of the Niemen, was to be taken away from Germany. Whom it would belong to, nobody knew yet. But there were some who called themselves Lithuanians (the Pikciurnas, like others round about Klaipeda, called themselves Lithovenians) going about saying this Niemen district ought to be joined on to Lithuania. Terrible! In Lithuania they were all zemaities¹—beggars, one and all!

Of course, it's the old tale of birds of a feather, she thought. Who wants it? Who's running to embrace those zemaities? Man like Kojelis, Staigys, Malone! . . . Does that Malone think the zemaities will give him money to put up fences? You'll wait long enough before you see it, my man, long enough! They don't have any fences themselves. Just think—joined to Lithuania! I don't need any Lithuania to be a Lithovenian! We've done without them up to now, and we can go on the same way. But maybe there's something else behind all this? That Staigys, now, sometimes he lets out things I don't quite understand. Dear God, why is Thy hand so heavy upon us? . . .

Pikciurniene wept. It was not quite clear why she wept—for her dead son, or the fall of Wilhelm, or because the war had ended so soon? Probably all three.

It wasn't so good that the Social-Democrats had got power in Germany, but still, that could be borne. But the papers said there was real hard fighting against some Spartakists, whatever they might be, who were trying to get power themselves. And those were said to be even worse than the Social-Democrats. They wanted to take everything away from the wealthy—the factories, the land, the fields—and divide it all up among the workers and farm hands. Pikciurniene's heart sank within her, and she prayed more fervently than ever.

"Lord God, Father in Heaven," she whispered. "How canst Thou allow

¹ Zemaite (or Zmud) was the name of a Lithuanian tribe of the old days that lived in great poverty along the lower reaches of the Niemen. In bourgeois Lithuania the word zemaite was used in contempt for the poor—for workers and farm labourers.

those godless Spartakists to get power over us, Thy humble servants? We are Thy children, Thy faithful followers! Have compassion on us, reduce to dust them that revile Thee, those accursed Spartakists who want to rob us! Amen!"

Evidently Pikciurniene's prayers were heard, for soon the papers brought the news that the most terrible, the most dangerous leaders of the Spartakists—Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg—had been killed. The Lord be praised!

But the Niemen district was separated from Germany, all the same. People said that for the time being it would be governed by the French, or the British, or maybe even the Americans.

"Well, let come what may! Perhaps things won't get any worse," sighed Pikciurniene. Her heart was already a little lighter.

But after all, a human being is not just a dumb animal. A human being thinks, worries. A human being needs daily bread, yes, but something more too.

The French? They always made Pikciurniene think of frogs, somehow. Folks said the French ate frogs. This gave her a squeamish distaste for them. Just like those workers from town who licked their chops over a bit of horse-meat! Ugh! . . . But wait a bit, what was it Pikciurna had read in the papers? (That good-for-nothing old man did nothing but read the papers; if he'd taken up some holy book, now, or something about farming!) Pikciurna had read that Klaipeda would make a good port for foreign ships. Well, why not?

"But whose ships?"

"They say it's being done so those revolutionary cutthroats shouldn't be able to use the port. The papers say the zemaitises are taking pattern from the Russian Bolsheviks. They've got their councils all over Lithuania! And maybe, Heaven forbid, they'll come along here and start their—their—what's it they call it?"

"You don't even know how to talk properly! Their devil's work, of course. To stir up the workers and farm labourers against us. Isn't that it?"

"Yes. . . . It wasn't put quite like that, but anything can happen."

"Yes, yes, I understand! So now British ships are going to come to Klaipeda, or even better, American ships. That's not so bad. They'll most likely have guns, they'll put them all along the coast and give those zemaitises what for, and those Bolsheviks too! M'yes. So everything's going to be safe and orderly! When you're safe, food tastes better! And you'll see, we shan't be having to give up our rye and wheat for bits of paper; we'll get real gold! You understand that, Jokubas? Gold! Ah, merciful God, how well you have heeded my prayers!"

Busė Pikciurniene at once forgot all about Frenchmen and frogs. She felt herself safe in Jesus' bosom. . . . She revelled in the thought of how she would sell wheat, rye, barley and pork.

Meanwhile, in the towns the hunger was getting worse. The townspeople, and particularly the workers, were near starvation point. And Pikciurniene flourished.

New furniture appeared in the house—a third sofa and three arm-chairs, two new carpets, a walnut bed for her son, an oak wardrobe with a bevelled mirror and an oak writing table. Pikciurniene could not have said who would sit and write at it, but it was pleasant to have it. Silk curtains hung at the windows, silk coverlets adorned the beds. (Who

wanted homespun? Old-fashioned stuff!) There were tapestry tablecloths—so beautiful that it was a shame to take them off to lay the table for guests. She did, however, take them off, for she also had white and coloured linen cloths. Silver liqueur glasses gleamed in the special cupboard for crystal, bought during the war. She did not quite know the use of these. But how pleasant it would be when Barbe asked: "Oh, Buse dear, what's that shining in there? What do you do with those things?"

After all, there was no need for any exact answer. You could just give a superior smile and say nothing.

When the French came and occupied the district, money began pouring in on Pikciurniene—first in hundreds, then in thousands.

But the number of beggars increased too. Some people would give them a few potatoes or a crust of bread for nothing, but most preferred the kind of "beggars" who brought something to barter.

Those who came with empty hands were never let in by Pikciurniene.

"After all, I can't feed all the beggars in the world, anyway," she said with a shrug. "If a person has something to exchange, that's another matter!"

One day a war invalid came. With tears in his eyes he asked for something to eat.

"What will you give me for it?" asked Pikciurniene indifferently, certain that the man had nothing.

"I—I'll pay you!" he stammered and began fumbling in his pocket.

"I don't want your beggarly money! I've enough of my own! Go to those that need it!"

"If you're so rich, then take pity on a starving man!"

"Sta-a-arving!" Pikciurniene mimicked him. "You're all starving. If I took pity on you all, I'd soon be starving myself. Haven't you anything you can exchange?"

The man thought a while, then took off his jacket.

"What will you give me for this?"

"It isn't worth anything."

"It's my best and only jacket, Madam."

"Keep it, then!"

"But my children are hungry!"

"Why should I have to worry about your children? . . . Oh well, maybe those rags of yours would do for one of the farm hands. Shall I give you some bread?" she said compassionately. After all, you had to be sorry for the poor fellow.

The man went away in his shirt, sniffing and wiping his eyes, a loaf of bread dangling in the sack slung over his despondently bent back.

Another time it was a man in civilian clothes. Before he had time to open his mouth, Pikciurniene asked: "What have you to barter?"

"Madam, take pity on me! I have nothing at all. If you don't ask too high a price. . ."

Pikciurniene looked him up and down.

"Where did you get that new fur hat? You can't buy hats like that nowadays. . . . And your top-boots? I'd even give you lard for those boots."

The man took off the boots, placed the hat on top of them, and left, holding in one hand all that she had given.

One day a woman came from the town. Pikciurniene was just having breakfast.

"Heavens above, there's no end to them!" she groaned, biting off a piece of bun. "When are they going to stop this begging? They've got used to coming around. An easy way of making a living!"

"Have pity, Mistress! People don't go begging if they can help it," said the woman.

"What can I give you? . . . Jokubelis!" she cried suddenly. "Where are your eyes? Look, Pluta's geese!"

"But they're not on our field," Jokubelis objected.

"They will be, if you dawdle! Go quick, you can finish eating afterwards! I'll cover up the meat to keep it warm. . . . All you want is to get out of doing anything. Bone lazy, you are!"

"Mistress, I'm not an ordinary beggar," the woman from town started again. "But I've lost everything in the war. Have pity on me! God will reward you. My children are hungry, they're ill with hunger."

"God himself turns His face from idlers."

Pikciurniene was watching the geese. She saw one of the Pluta children come running out after them to stop them getting on to the Pikciurna fields.

"Jokubelis, hurry, hurry!" Busè called. "Drive the geese here into the yard! Quick! Quick! Can't you see he's turning them? . . . Aha! Good, splendid!"

Now she had time to turn back to the woman and examine her from head to foot. A skirt all patches, a gingham blouse, the kind worn only by the poor since the war, bare head, bare feet. No, there was nothing to take from this one.

"Why don't any of you ask me for work? You want me to give you something? All right, but first go and do some work in the shed out there. The fields are being manured, and I haven't enough hands. . . . Brought them in, Jokubelis? Good lad! Now come and finish your breakfast. I'll show those good-for-nothings!"

"I don't want any more. . . . Marcius Pluta is crying, he says why did I drive the geese away!"

"Well, you might have eaten some more. What'll I do with this meat now?"

Pikciurniene started clearing the table and the woman sank down on the ground by the door; the smell of fat, eggs and coffee made her head swim. She had never begged before, she could not bring herself to say that she had eaten nothing for three days, that she desperately needed something, even if it was only a crust of dry bread.

"Well, go and work till dinner-time. Then I'll feed you," Pikciurniene encouraged her. She finished clearing the table and went.

The woman went into the shed and worked until she collapsed.

"That's always the way! Only brought down trouble on myself again. Heavens above, why am I always plagued? Get that woman out of here! Adomas, take the cart, harness up and drive her to the station!"

"The station? Can't you see what's the matter with her?"

"What is the matter, then?"

"She'd got a flow of blood," said one of the serving girls.

"What business is that of mine? I'm not a midwife, am I? Get her away, I tell you, look sharp, get her out of my yard!"

"Give her something, at least! After all, she worked as long as she could. She was simply worn out."

"Heavens above, have you all gone clean crazy? She can thank me for driving her to the station. What other mistress would do that?"

The day-labourers and farm hands who had gathered round collected a little money for the unfortunate woman. They hoped to shame their mistress. But Pikciurniene remarked indifferently that those who had too much could scatter it right and left if they liked, but as for her, she had nothing to spare.

A shepherd boy took the woman to the doctor. All the money they had collected barely sufficed to pay him and to get medicine.

"And she didn't give me even a crust of bread, not even a crust!" the sick woman wept.

16

Trude Publiene too watched the papers, read them even more carefully than Pikciurna.

She was so stirred by the Revolution that she could hardly sleep. She drank in every piece of news from Russia. Because that was what must be happening in Germany too! She never missed a single item from the collapsing German front. The events in Berlin—Jurgis wrote from there, but once only—affected her so strongly that whenever she thought of them her heart beat fast, her eyes sparkled with hope and she glowed all over.

Every evening she told her boy that his father was a hero, his father was fighting bad men who wanted war, who wanted to make poor people like them go and kill each other because war helped the rich to get a lot more money and all sorts of good things.

"Like Pikciurniene?" asked little Viktoriukas.

Trude had never said anything to her boy about Pikciurniene. How did he know of her?

"Who's been talking to you about Pikciurniene?"

"I saw her scolding Plutiene, Mum. And Anele told me she's bad like that because she's so very, very rich."

"Don't let's talk about Pikciurniene, dear."

"But why not?"

Yes, there it was—why not? A difficult question to answer. And after all—why not?

"Better talk about our Daddy. When he comes home he'll bring us a big, big bundle full of all sorts of good things!"

"As big as this?" The boy spread out his arms as wide as they would go.

"Bigger! So big that nobody can hold it!"

The boy could not imagine so many good things all at once, so he wisely did not bother his head about it. But he did want to know what his Daddy looked like.

"Has he got a beard?"

The mother was half asleep, but the son went on thinking about his father, who would not have a beard, of course—he did not like beards—but would be very big and very jolly. And the bundle of good things he would bring would be a little bit open so that you could break off a piece of bun. And when you broke it lots and lots of sweets would come rolling out. Viktoriukas ate them and ate them all night. . . .

Trude was pleased to hear about the capitulation of Germany and the flight of Wilhelm II to Holland, but not particularly excited. She felt

no special interest either in all the talk about the Niemen district being separated from Germany; Jurgis had told her that if there was a revolution, frontiers would not stop it.

Nevertheless, her spirits were high, and she waited hopefully for further developments.

Then the papers which had been full of such great happenings gradually changed their tone. There were still some interesting reports here and there, although they were not very reliable, but on the whole the columns were filled mainly with local news.

The Benagiai men had come back from the army long ago. The first to return were the sons of the rich farmers—Benagys, Meikis and others of the same kind. They all abused the Revolution. They said the Russian Revolution was to blame for everything. The sailors were supposed to have started it all over there, and then the sailors in Germany had been infected and they began rebelling too. And that was how all the trouble began. What had they to grumble at, those sailors? Nothing to do but sit and guzzle, pick their teeth, play games and run after women. Was that so bad, now? What, actually, had they ever done? The battle of Jutland? . . . Well, all right. But what else? The submarine war? But there'd been no revolution on the submarines! If they'd only stuck it out a little longer, if there'd been just one more really good offensive, Germany would most certainly have won the war!

Then we'd have gone on living in the old way, they said. Or even better. We Germans would have ruled the whole world! But now? . . .

Now there were some of the labourers back from the army going about, saying they wouldn't work on the old conditions. Getting independent. Had their conferences and their councils, decided that over there in Berlin some were going too slowly and others too fast, but anyway, all the rich men were soon to turn up their toes because they didn't know how to work themselves and now after the war they wouldn't be able to find a single worker. Well, and then. . . .

But the rich men found workers all right—those who could see that the Revolution was ending, and—alas!—not in favour of the workers! There had been too many who certainly wanted a change, but had no desire to help in any revolution themselves. "Let the others look after it, we've had enough of fighting!" So the result was bitter disappointment.

There was nothing left but to go knocking at the rich men's doors again.

Pluta, too, had come home long ago.

He was little changed. Depressed, careworn, with a gaunt, lined face—that was Pluta when he left, and that was Pluta when he returned. He felt no particular grief that Germany had lost the war, and no particular joy over the changes that had taken place. He expected nothing from them so far as he was concerned. In fact he hardly thought about them at all. All these matters were too high for him, too far away and too hard to understand. And another reason why Pluta could not go very deeply into things was that he was crushed by his own troubles. And then, too, perhaps nobody explained it all properly.

He found Trude Bubliene in charge of his house. She worked hard on his poor farm, looked after his children who in their turn looked after little Viktoriukas, economized and saved, added her own mite to what

she could make from the farm, and took it all to the hospital in town where Plutiene had been lying seriously ill for many months.

And still Bublís did not come.

Evidently there were still important happenings of some sort in Berlin and various other cities. That must be why Jurgis Bublís was delayed. But what they could be was more than Trude could imagine. Perhaps, though, he was in prison? Or dead? But Trude would not even think of that.

One day she could no longer keep her thoughts within her, and asked Pluta why there was revolution everywhere else, and things were so quiet here? What did he think? Of course it wasn't absolutely quiet, people talked and cursed and threatened, but that was all.

"What?" gasped Pluta, as though suddenly startled out of sleep.

"D'you want them to start fighting here too? You want revolution?"

"Perhaps I do, Martynas! Why has the job been only half done? When you sow rye, you harrow it too so that the crows and sparrows won't peck up the seed, don't you? It's the same here."

But figures of speech were too much for Pluta, he held stubbornly to one idea.

"I don't know what good that revolution can do us. The gentry have always been over us, and they always will be."

"But why do we have to have gentry at all?"

"The hospital's wanting money again," Pluta answered just as though he had not heard Trude's last words. "When I was there, they were after me right at once: 'If you don't pay, you can take the patient home.' But how can I take her when she can't even move or talk? God, where can I find money?"

Trude did not know where to find money either. She had none, she had had none for a long time, and there was nothing more she could sell.

"Perhaps we'll manage to think of something, Martynas. If only Jurgis were here," she groaned, then caught herself up. No, she would not let herself start groaning. She knew this was the most difficult time, but she believed that other, better days would come. So she would wait and hope, and not let herself groan. But how was she to help Pluta?

"There's nothing we can think of," Pluta answered, then rose, took his cap and turned to the door.

"Where are you going, Martynas?" asked Trude in alarm.

"To try my luck."

"Don't go to the Pikciurnas, Martynas! Don't go! Maybe it might be worthwhile trying the Staigyses again?"

"Eh, Staigys is just as poor as we are!" With a hopeless gesture Pluta turned and stumped across the fields to the Pikciurnas.

And still there was no sign of Jurgis Bublís.

The papers said that the Klaipeda district really was being separated from Germany, it was to be occupied by the French and governed by some sort of prefect.

Suddenly—in one night, it seemed—the whole district was full of French and other soldiers armed to the teeth, so many of them and so many guns that you almost expected the ground to give way under the weight of them! They did not stop in the town, either, but went deeper

into the country," towards the places where there was fighting, where people did not want to submit to the gentry.

"Those politicians just kick us around like a ball!" said Staigys bitterly when he saw Trude. "As if we hadn't been through enough, as if we didn't suffer enough from the war!"

"How's it all going to end?"

"I wonder. People have a lot of patience, Trude. But it's not endless. I was in town yesterday, I went to take a look at the docks. You should see the way they're rushing to load the ships! It's an eye-opener! I looked at what was going on on board and I thought—how rich our district must be if all that can be squeezed out of it! It seems we have to pay reparations to the Entente—as though we were to blame for that damned war! But what's the use of talking? Take what comes and make the best of it. Mr. Steputaitis who's over us now—the chairman of the directorium—he spends all day with the prefect practising his French, and the officials are turning themselves inside out to collect all the cattle and pigs and wheat and all sorts of other things! The ships are waiting, they've got to be loaded quick!"

"But what were the people saying?"

Staigys shrugged his shoulders and snorted angrily.

"The people stand there, gaunt, hungry, and watch those fat beasts taking away the last grain. But what can they do with guns pointed at their heads? Jump into the water? Our Steputaitis and that French General Audris would be only too pleased—less bother! People trail about the streets like shadows. All who can are getting out of the town. Yesterday I saw a long queue at a shop waiting for bread to come in. Whether they got any I don't know, but I do know that two women fell down and didn't get up, I saw that myself. Those two won't need any more bread."

Then one day Jurgis Bublis came back.

He came on foot, and as he crossed the cemetery he saw a small group of people, an open grave, a coffin, the grey-headed pastor, Pluta and—Trude. She had a wreath of fir branches in her hand. Pluta's children were clustered round her, holding on to her skirt—pale and frightened. But no—there was one who did not look like the others! He was younger. Flaxen curls fluttered in the wind, and his eyes were clear and bright—like Trude's! A wave of warmth swept through Jurgis. He came closer and heard the pastor saying that those whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. Jurgis saw Pluta weeping. He saw the poor coffin of undressed pine lowered into the grave. He saw a few men fill it in and erect a cross, and saw Trude lay the only wreath on it. Jurgis stood and watched it all.

In those years of war when every corner in Busè Pikciurniene's "palace," as people mockingly called her new house, was crammed with wealth, Trude Būbliene's only room had been stripped of all but bare necessities.

She prepared the meagre supper. But no, it was not meagre! There might be only a few potatoes and a hunk of black bread, but Jurgis was there. They were sitting down three to table. They had never been three before.

For the first time in all those long years Trude's home felt warm and cosy. She found a table-cloth in the cupboard—not new, but clean, and put clean white sheets on the bed. For a moment the sun broke through

the clouds and sent a rosy beam through the straggly pines outside the window. The poor room was filled with light, with new life. Jurgis had come home! It mattered nothing that his boots were worn, his trousers frayed and ragged, his jacket stained, the buttons off and the sleeves out-at-elbows. Jurgis would throw off those rags, there were still some of his old clothes left. The great thing was that he had come home, and come home safe and sound, with arms and legs whole. And Trude felt that it was not chance that had preserved him—destiny had preserved him for great purposes, for fresh struggles. She gazed and gazed at him, she felt she could never gaze her fill! He was so tall and slender and broad-shouldered, so handsome and so good! But there was some silver in his dark hair.

"Jurgis, you've started going grey!" cried Trude, but added quickly—evidently fearing he might be hurt: "It suits you!"

Jurgis laughed.

"And what about you? Come on, let's see!"

"Let me alone! I've no time to be looking in the mirror to see how much of my youth's left—and no mirror either, only a broken bit."

Jurgis put his arms round his wife, pressed her to him, kissed her on the head and saw several white hairs.

"You know—when I was at the front I always imagined you getting grey and wrinkled and bent. You were always working and worrying. . . . And always about other people, always helping the ones in trouble! But today when I saw you there at the cemetery, you looked just the same as the first time I saw you. You remember?"

"You're laughing at me! Do you know how old I was then? Busè scolded me, said the milk wasn't dry on my lips yet!"

"We'll always be young, my dear one. We mustn't let ourselves get old, we've got a lot to do yet."

Trude blushed and hid her face on Jurgis' shoulder. She herself felt that she was still young. Otherwise she would not have waited and longed for him like a girl for her sweetheart.

For the first time in all those years she could sit and let her hands lie idle, she could rest and be happy. She had never rejoiced over the much-played-up victories of the war. When the church bells rang to announce the capture of another fortress (and in the first year of the war they had often rung, for the Germans were still advancing), Trude had only sighed and thought of those who had been killed in the battle, and of the women who would long mourn their dear ones. And when the church bells stopped proclaiming "great victories," when instead of ringing they tolled and tolled and never seemed to stop—for many died from terrible epidemics—typhus and that Spanish influenza that came from somewhere—then Trude never had a free moment. She could not sit idle, she was always to be found wherever help was needed. And it was needed by many.

Yes, that evening Trude Bublione was happy. Jurgis had come home! True, this was not exactly the way she had pictured his return. It was to have put an end to all troubles. That was what she had dreamed of, particularly in the last year when all the other men came home and only Jurgis was still away. He was as dear to her as ever—no, even dearer—because he had risen against those who oppressed the working man. She had never talked to anybody of her love or longing when he was away, and she did not want to say anything of it now. He should understand it all for himself. And he did.

"Jurgis, you haven't told me anything about it all."

"What's there to tell?"

"Tell us, Daddy, I want to hear too—what's war like?" Viktoriukas begged. He was sitting in his little chair quieter and more serious than he had ever been before.

Jurgis Bubliss rose and began pacing up and down the room, stopping now and then to stare at the walls—or rather, at the newspapers pasted on them, as though he wanted to absorb in one moment all the lies that had been printed over so many years. In former times, too, he had had the habit of pacing up and down the room, frowning, his whole mind concentrated on the answer to some question that gave him no peace. But now he already knew much. Now his eyes were wide open, they saw clearly. They could see not only the dark, gloomy, burdensome past, not only the confused, unclear present, but a future that promised much. He could also see that a broad field of struggle separated that future from the present. Many would take part in that struggle, and many would go under. But Bubliss knew without a shadow of doubt whose would be the ultimate victory.

"Jurgis, talk, say something—anything!"

"But is it so bad to be quiet and think?"

"Remember how many years it is since I've heard your voice! I was always with other people, but there was nobody I could really talk to—folks couldn't think of anything but their own troubles. They had many of them."

Before Bubliss could answer there was a knock at the door. People began dropping in one after the other. Staigys came, and Pikciurna's men Krizas and Adomas, and the labourer Valaitis.

If anybody had asked them what reason they had for coming, they would have said: "Nothing special . . . just looked in."

But nobody asked. It was clear without words why they came by tacit agreement to the Bubliss' house. Trude gave up the last chair to the guests and sat down on the edge of the bed, taking the boy on her knee.

For some time Bubliss said little. He only gave each fresh arrival a hard hand-clasp and a word of greeting. He continued his pacing, stopping for a moment before one or another of the visitors, or to stand by the window drumming on the pane.

Night was falling. The setting sun had sent in a parting smile and now the sky was gloomy again. The rain would stop for a little while, only to pour down faster than ever. The wind drove the drops hard against the window and howled in the chimney. The old, rusty alarm-clock ticked off minutes and hours. Sometimes it seemed to be at its last gasp, the ticking became uneven, halting, like the footsteps of a weary man; but then it would gather up fresh strength and tramp on.

Nobody started any real conversation. Staigys lighted his pipe. Trude quietly asked about his wife's health. They whispered, shaking their heads. Then silence fell again.

Finally Jurgis Bubliss said: "Well, Comrades. . ."

He sat down for a moment on the edge of the bed beside his wife, took her hand and stroked it. That hand had done so much hard toil that the skin was rough and the fingers would not straighten. But the more Trude had worked, the poorer she had become. . . . And those who did no work at all got rich, thought Bubliss.

Again he turned to the guests.

"Well, Comrades, so we've come together again at last. . . . How've you been going on, these years? Where's your Iron Cross, Adomas?"

"The same place as yours, Jurgis."

"I never got one," laughed Bubliss. "I wasn't much of a soldier."

"I did," said Adomas sombrely. "But believe me, Jurgis, I threw it away long ago. What did they pin an Iron Cross on me for? Because I killed so many people. What I ought to have done was hold out a hand to them and say: 'Why should we kill each other? Let's go and kill the ones who've sent us into this hell!' But we didn't do it."

Adomas jumped up. It was as though he could not sit still, he wanted to pace the room. But the room was not big enough for two to pace, so he and Bubliss stopped, face to face. Both were tall and erect, but Bubliss' eyes were filled with vitality and decision, while those of Adomas were screened by dark glasses that concealed any expression.

"I threw my gun away, Jurgis, in the Argonne forest. There was a gas attack. When I came to I knew I was in a dark forest, but where I was or what had happened I could not remember."

Adomas fell silent again. Reflections from the lamp played on his glasses. After a moment or two, he continued.

"But all the same, I feel sort of guilty. Maybe I ought to have done differently. But I didn't know how. We did know, all of us, what was happening in the east, over there in Russia. But we had nobody to start things. Only those that could talk and dream. . . . And then when I came out of hospital, it was all over. The Social-Democrats and the rich men, the factory owners, had settled down and turned things the way they wanted. Nearly everywhere the arms had been struck out of the hands of the Spartakists. So what was there left for me to do?"

At that moment the door quietly opened again and Pluta entered. He nodded silently in greeting and then remained standing in the middle of the room, not sure what to do next.

"Come over here, Neighbour, sit down!" said Trude, indicating a seat. "Are the children alone in the house? Won't they be frightened?"

"My sister and her husband are there, they haven't left yet. We talked a bit, then they went to bed, they've got to be off early tomorrow. But I couldn't get to sleep, somehow, so I thought I'd just drop in here a while."

"Quite right, Martynas."

Bubliss, who had let Pluta in, had been looking at him thoughtfully, and now he spoke—quietly, musingly, half to himself, half to the company.

"So here we are, we've come to the really important question—what to do? What to do so that they shouldn't wipe the ground with us all, the way they've done with our Pluta."

A storm of feeling rose in Pluta at these words. His hands trembled, a hoarse, choked gurgle rose in his throat but he could not articulate a word. Trude felt sorry for him. She, better than any other, knew his grief and his utter inability to stand up for himself. She took him by the elbow and stroked his arm to let him feel her friendly concern.

"Jurgis, why say that now? He's only just buried his wife. It's bad enough for him as it is. Why make him feel worse?"

"Just because it is so bad, Trude!" Bubliss answered. "All that's happened to him could happen to any one of us. The important thing is that both he and all the rest of us should understand why it happens and who's to blame for it."

"I only know one thing," said Pluta. "When I was at the front I prayed to God all the time to let me come back alive to my family and take up my yoke again."

"And so God heard your prayer?" said Krizas Rauslys, one of Pikciurniene's men. There was a glint of mockery in his eyes, but Pluta saw nothing of it.

"Yes, of course!" he said simply. "I was never even wounded, and I was in terrible battles! That was because I had to come back to my wife and children. And I did come back. . . . Though my wife's gone now. But that was God's will. What have I left but my faith in God?"

"You ought to say—in God and Pikciurniene—isn't that more like it?" said Adomas ironically. But Pluta still did not catch the mockery.

"Whatever she may be like," he said with more animation, "all the same, if it hadn't been for Pikciurniene. . . . You told me not to go, Trude, but Pikciurniene really did take pity on me and helped me. How can I thank God enough for softening her heart! But you know the saying—Heaven's closest to those in trouble."

"You poor devil," said Bubliss, smiling sadly. "You haven't an idea how much misfortune you can bring down on yourself. Brought it down already, probably."

Pluta let his head hang and said nothing for a moment. Then he forced out in a choked voice: "Now—it's as God wills. . . . I'll struggle along somehow. My hands are still strong."

"Well," said Adomas almost in a whisper, "you won't have to struggle long. The noose is being got ready for you. Soon it'll be thrown over your neck. . . . By Pikciurniene. . . . Eh, what's the use of this sort of talk? Jurgis, you speak, we're waiting to hear what you can tell us. What are we to do? How are we to break free?"

Then Bubliss spoke. He spoke quietly, as though half to himself, but every word was clear. All the time he held his wife's hand, gently playing with her fingers, now and then stroking the head of his son sleeping in his mother's arms. Outside, the wind had died down, the rain had stopped, quietness fell and the moon peeped out through the clouds. In the room everything was so quiet that one could hear the paraffin hissing in the lamp.

Bubliss spoke of those who make their bread through the toil of their hands, or at least try to make it, try not to starve. For centuries the struggle has raged between slave-owners and slaves, between landlords and serfs, between factory-owners and workers. And escape must be sought not in the Bible. The Bible promises heaven after death to those who have suffered on earth. But people have risen in revolt against the hell which the exploiters have made of this earth.

"But what are we to do? What must we do to win?" Adomas insisted, "Organize! Every one of our groups must grow into a regiment, and every regiment into an army! We must run our own lives. For that we need an army, our own army. We've got an example—Russia. . . . There the workers themselves put things in order in the country. They were fol-



lowed by the peasants. And they didn't let themselves be split, as happened here. Now—why were we split and separated? Because some think like our Pluta, and others like those Adomas spoke of."

"That's true, Bublīs, absolutely true!" burst from Staigys who up to now had said nothing. "We mustn't wait, we've got to act."

Dawn was already tinting the sky with colour when the guests left the Bublīs.

Only one evening had passed, but all felt a change. Now there was somebody to whom one could go, to whom one could talk, at least talk! Yes, the war had had its effect. Adomas, of course, had had a certain understanding of things even before the war—that was true. He had cursed the rich and the way they ran things, but it stopped at that. Now, as Bublīs put it, he knew the cause of the disease.

Only Pluta, standing by his gate and holding out a gnarled hand to Staigys, said uncertainly: "Perhaps God will be merciful to Bublīs too. He's an unbeliever, but he's a true heart all the same. Good night."

17

A rumour flew through Benagai that there was a Spartakist in the village. They'd put him in prison in Berlin, but then they'd let him out, and now here he was in Benagai, ready to start his tricks.

"Of all things!" cried Pikciurniene in horror. "What's he come for? Just to kill us all, nothing else! And why? What for? Don't I help the poor? And look at all the people I give work to—where'd they be but for me? And during the war—it was 'Pikciurniene! Pikciurniene! Give me rye! Give me potatoes! Give me—give me—' And Pikciurniene, what did she do? Gave and gave. And now they come, these—! They won't ask if you gave, what you gave, who you gave to, they'll just come and kill you like a dog. You think I don't know the whole world's upside down? But tell me, who is he, this Spartakist? Maybe I know him? What? Bublīs?" Pikciurniene's jaw dropped. "That's my—"

She nearly said "my brother-in-law."

"That one? My enemy! Well, let him just try something!" she cried threateningly, shaking her fist. "I'm not afraid of any Bublīs!"

With a lightened heart—for the dangerous Spartakist had turned out to be only Bublīs—she gave her attention to the next things she had to consider.

Those next things were the Snekutīs and Pluta. But the Snekutīs affair went wrong.

Somehow or other that worthless Barbe got hold of money and paid back the debt. . . . Didn't want to sell—if you please. The draggletailed bitch! Never mind, I'll get after Pluta! It's about time. Strike while

the iron's still hot. Or maybe he'll manage to scrape up some money too and get his notes of hand back. . . .

One morning as she returned from the labourers' hut in Traiskiai, she saw Pluta in the yard. He was waiting for her, eyes down, cap in hand—as it behoved people to stand before Pikciurniene.

Ha—Pikciurniene knew Pluta like her ten fingers. He would have kissed her hand had it been customary here. He would submit to any demand she might make. But Pikciurniene made no demands. Why should she? She had him tight in her fist as it was! And a rope round his neck into the bargain. Yesterday Pikciurniene had given that rope a little twitch. Nothing much so far—just a twitch to try the effect.

Let's see what comes of it, she had thought, and drove Pluta's horse into her yard.

"Well—and what do you want?" she asked Pluta innocently.

"You know what I want, Mistress."

"What—money again?" said Pikciurniene in mock surprise. "No, my friend, I'm not giving you any more. You don't pay the interest as it is. One of these days I'll have to sue you, to put the bailiff on to you. Just think how much you've had from me already! You'd never seen so much before in your life. I've got your notes of hand, I can add them up for you now, if you like. It's only thanks to my good heart that you're living in Benagiai today, Pluta. You're a neighbour, and I was sorry for you. Didn't I give you money for the hospital? And the funeral? But there's a limit to everything. Money doesn't grow on trees. I helped you as long as you were in trouble, but enough's enough!"

"Nay, Mistress, I'm not here about money. I want. . . ."

"Oh, so that's it, is it? You want to say that my money's your money?"

"Nay, you've got me all wrong. I want to start working. I've found a place. Carting. . . ."

"Well, get on with it, then!"

"Yes, but how can I get on with it? When I went into the field for the horse this morning, it was gone!"

"What—your horse ran off?" Pikciurniene laughed mockingly. "What sort of a farmer are you if you can't even look after your horse!"

"But you've got it! I saw it as soon as I came. Why did you take away my horse? Haven't you enough of your own?"

"Who says I took away your horse? Who's dared tell such a lie? What's this rubbish you're talking? If I had any horse brought in here, it was from my own field, not yours. I didn't even know whose it was."

"But Pikciurniene. . . ."

"I'll thank you to talk properly to me—'took away your horse,' indeed! I don't steal horses!"

"Don't mock me. Have pity! I ask you—I beg you—give me back my horse. Can't you see—it's sick, it's all swollen. . . ."

Pluta swallowed a sob.

"Sick?" Pikciurniene laughed loudly, enjoying the sight of Pluta's confused misery. "Why's it got swollen all of a sudden? Maybe from eating my clover? You hear me—*my clover!*"

"It was sick yesterday evening, Pikciurniene, it wouldn't eat. But I thought it might be better in the morning. It needs medicine. . . ."

"Oh, I've no time to waste arguing with you! Pay three hundred marks damages and take your nag. Or it'll cost you more."

"But Pikciurniene, that's nearly what the horse itself is worth! Don't laugh at me!"

"I'm not laughing, I mean what I say. All right, then, you can leave me the horse in lieu of damages. If it gets well I'll pay you the difference, that's to say, I'll take it off your debt; so you'll be that much better off."

"But how can I make the money to pay you what I owe if I haven't a horse?"

"And d'you think you're going carting with a horse that's sick?"

"I can get it cured. Surely you fear God. You go to church. Surely you've a heart in your breast, not just a stone. Surely you're a Christian!"

"And don't Christians have to make a living too? But why should I stand here arguing with a beggar! Get out of here, I've got more important things to think about!"

Pikciurniene wanted to go, but Pluta blocked her path, holding out his hands pleadingly.

"But Neighbour! Dear, kind Neighbour!"

"I'm no neighbour to you! I want no neighbours of your sort! I'm sick of your eternal begging! Pay me three hundred marks damages and take your nag!"

"All right, I'll pay. But not at once. I haven't a groschen just now. Add it to what I owe you and let me take my horse. Look at it. . . . Dear God in Heaven, is there no justice in this world?"

"Add it to your debt? Ha! Ha! Ha! Just as though you only owed me a few groschen? Out of my way!" Her voice was like the crack of a whip. She turned and went into the house.

Pluta ran off, clutching his head.

What a shock all this was to poor Pikciurniene! If Pluta started working, earning money, then—who could tell—he might struggle out of her web, get on his feet again! That mustn't be allowed to happen.

She found Pikciurna at home, thoughtfully smoking his pipe.

"So you're still here, are you? One might think you'd sold all the land and had nothing to do. You've forgotten that we've three hundred morgs to look after."

"Busè, I don't like this. What's got into you? In the first place we haven't that much land. Secondly. . ."

"Secondly, all we need to reach three hundred is Pluta's land. And we shall have it, don't you worry about that, my good man! We'll take that land of Pluta's. And there'll be another cottage for labourers too. And then we'll have to think seriously about the Malones. . . . Are we to go on quarrelling with them about boundaries all our lives?"

"Come to your senses, Busè! Give Pluta that wretched nag of his. He's been here, nearly in tears. He'd mended his cart, got a job with it, and there's the horse gone. Now—that's a bad sort of trick to play on a man, Mother! Let him alone, poor fellow! You can't keep peace with a single neighbour."

"In tears—humph! And now you'll start snivelling in sympathy, eh? You witless loon—I'm ashamed to have such a husband. What was I ever thinking of when I took you? Where'd we be if I was weak-kneed like you? Sitting with our arms round each other and howling? No, thank you, my dear husband! I'm not wasting tears on other people's troubles. Would anyone shed tears over ours? You just see how they'll all rub their hands

if we get a bit of bad luck! But our luck's good, so they can just gnaw their fingers!"

"But haven't you enough horses? What'll you do with that broken-winded nag of Pluta's? And think of the neighbours—what'll they say?"

"It's not a broken-winded nag at all. All it needs is oats and clover. Why, look at it—it's still quite young! A bit small, of course. Can't harness it with any of ours, but for taking milk, say—it 'ud be all right for that! But what's the use of trying to drum sense into you? You'd give away your last pair of trousers!"

Pikciurna went out without answering, and Pikciurniene began counting her money. She was blind and deaf to everything else, utterly absorbed in her thoughts of the future.

Suddenly the yard dog set up a great barking, and she heard men's voices.

Pikciurniene ran to the window.

"Well! The impudence of it! So Pluta's brought Bubliss, has he? Two of a kind!"

This was the first time Pikciurniene had seen Bubliss since his return. She looked at him with curiosity—what was he like now? There was nothing special about him. He was wearing an army tunic and cap. But for some reason he was strolling about the yard as though it all belonged to him, as though he were the master here.

See there, now, the free-and-easy way he stalks around! And Pluta, that moth-eaten runt, gazing at him as though he were Lord God Almighty, or the governor, or a gendarme!

Look at that, look at that! Doesn't even come up to the house, the villain! Doesn't want to ask or bargain or even talk! The vicious cur! Now they're making straight for the horse!

Well, what next? There now! . . . But—what? Is our Adomas a Spartakist too? The dirty scum! You never know when you're taking a snake into your bosom! Came back from the army, asked for work. And of course I went and took him. And look what he turns out to be! . . .

Bubliss unfastened the horse, which seemed almost at its last gasp, felt its swollen belly and said something to Adomas, who ran into the shed and came back with medicine. Pluta unclenched the horse's teeth and opened its mouth, while Adomas poured the medicine down.

Heavens above, thought Pikciurniene, where's that useless man of mine? Never there when he's wanted, goes off and hides somewhere! And here's men coming into our yard, doing whatever they want, making themselves quite at home. . . .

Pikciurniene rushed headlong out of the house.

"Have you gone stark, staring, raving mad? What are you doing here? Adomas, are you out of your mind too?" Pikciurniene could not think of anything else to say.

"Can't you see for yourself the horse is sick?" said Adomas. "How can you give the poor man back a half-dead horse?"

"Who said I was going to give it back? You snake, you lump of rat poison! Jokubas! Jokubas! Where's he got to, that Pikciurna? . . . Joku-belis! . . . And the boy's gone too! Let that horse alone, I tell you! Bubliss, how dare you touch anything in my yard!"

"Me? I've come with Pluta to get his horse. Queer, to find it here in your yard!"

"And you, Adomas, sticking your nose in, helping these agitators make trouble! Pluta, you'd better be careful. You'll pay dearly for this! . . . Merciful God, they really are taking the horse! Just like that! As though it was theirs! There's no justice in the world! To be set at naught in my own house! Adomas, stop them!"

"Now you must ride it briskly for a bit," Adomas was calmly telling Pluta. "After the medicine it needs to run for an hour or so."

"Well, why are you standing there? What are you waiting for? To kiss Pikciurniene's feet? Get on your horse and go!" cried Bublís.

Pluta had been shifting from foot to foot beside the horse, feeling anything but happy. He was sure this would end badly. Nevertheless, encouraged by Bublís and Adomas, he mounted, struck the horse's sides with his heels and disappeared out of the gate.

But Heavens above, that's robbery! thought Pikciurniene. Barefaced robbery! Or is it only the beginning of Spartakist carryings on? . . . No, Pikciurniene's not going to surrender as easily as that!

"Don't you count me as a relation, Bublís," she burst out. "We've not been relations for a long time. And now you come and steal a horse from me! You needn't think I'm going to let that pass!"

Bublís laughed.

"I don't, my dear Busè. One doesn't expect it from your sort. But what's to be done if you've no decency, and play such a trick on a poor man? Someone's got to help him."

"And d'you know what the sentence is for stealing a horse? Five years, and that'll be too little for you, you jail-bird! Hardly got back, and starting your dirty game already! Maybe you think we've no law and order here? Maybe you think we're helpless, and you can just run riot and murder us all in our beds?"

She was still storming when Bublís was far away, and storming she hurried to the gendarme.

That same day the gendarme took Bublís from his home.

18

The market was a big one and opened early. Before the first cock-crow, the fishmongers were setting out their boxes, and blowing on their fingers to take off the chill of early morning. After all, if there was no trade they had to do something. And there was no trade because there were no buyers, and there were no buyers because the market flag had not gone up on the roof of the county council building. The faded market flag would not rise until six.

Processions of farm carts made their way along the roads. Pigs squealed, sheep bleated, chickens squawked. Every farmer was eager to be among the first to arrive, so as to get a good place. The earlier one came, the better. Those who had fast horses could get well-placed stalls where they would sell their produce quickly and at better prices. Those with horses hardly able to drag themselves along, let alone pull a cart, were just out of luck. By the time they arrived there would be no place left at all, they would have to sell their wares at half price and lucky to get that.

On this particular morning Pikciurniene had no reason for going early. She did not intend to sell anything. How could she sit there calmly

trading? That needs patience, and all her thoughts were in the courthouse. Nevertheless she left early as usual. And she used the Bergeshoch carriage. The trouble was that worthless farm hand Krizas, a tall, handsome fellow with a fine moustache who you might say was born to be a coachman—that Krizas said he was ill. Just pretending, of course. No doubt about it! To get ill on a day like this, the kind of day that comes only once or twice in a lifetime! Who'd put him up to it? Bublīs was in prison. But it's a true saying—however much you feed a wolf, it always keeps looking back at the forest. Bred in the bone!

Of course, she could have made do with Adomas as coachman. But could she trust him—that was the question? And on a day like this? No, Heaven forbid—he'd be sure to get up to something! Overturn the carriage in the ditch at the very least . . . try to break his mistress' neck.

They were real devils! They'd no fear of anything—neither the law nor God. And Adomas—he must have been poisoned, too, long ago. No, he'd better stop at home.

Pikciurniėne could not forget how he had given Pluta the horse. Who could? If you ride in my cart, you sing my song. And whose cart was Adomas in? Pikciurniėne's! Wasn't it her bread he ate? Wasn't it from her he'd be expecting money at Christmas? But whom did he serve? That beggar Pluta! Gave him the horse, and even offered to be a witness. . . . Ha! Ha! Ha! Just the kind of witness judges like!

Adomas had become morose, always thinking about something, turning something over in his mind, talking to nobody. At times it looked as though he was cooking up something bad.

"Jokubas, you'll have to drive today," Busė told her husband.

"But I always . . ."

"Today we're going in the carriage."

"Are you crazy?" cried her husband. "Going to market in the carriage again? Folks'll just laugh at us!"

"I'm not going to market. I'm going to the courthouse! This is a big day for me. We're going to climb one step higher today!"

"And if you take the small cart—will that stop you winning the case? You'll win just the same!"

"Jokubas, I know you haven't a scrap of pride in you. If it wasn't for me, you'd harness the dog to the wheelbarrow. It's only I that pulls you out of the mud. . . . Go and harness up! And see that Adomas doesn't play some trick!"

The Bergeshoch carriage rolled out of the Pikciurna gates, its varnish and silver sparkling in the first rays of the sun. Pikciurniėne sat alone on the soft cushions. Pikciurna was on the box, holding the reins and the whip with its silver-mounted handle.

But however swiftly a person tries to drain the cup of enjoyment, some drop of bitterness is always there at the bottom. Pikciurniėne had hardly emerged from the gate when she heard a rattling behind. She turned—and there was Malone hurrying to market with his half-grown pigs.

Of course it was very pleasant to let him see her riding in her carriage. But was Pikciurniėne to drive all the way to Priekulė with this tailing behind?

"Jokubas! Drive faster!"

"What for? What the devil will you do there so early? Count the sparrows?" Pikciurna objected in a sleepy voice.

"Look at Malone there behind us, you fool!"

"I see him. What of it?"

"I don't want an escort like that! Can't you hear the pigs squealing?"

"Let him pass us, then!" Pikciurna yawned again. "If they're taking pigs, they want to get there early." He began to draw aside to make room for his neighbour.

"Heavens, what a dolt! Isn't there anything you can understand? Horses like these, a carriage like this. . . . Give me the reins, I'll drive if you're such a blockhead and don't know how to keep up our dignity. . . ."

"Nay, then!" Pikciurna lashed the horses and they began to gallop, tails in the air. Like the gentry out for a ride!

But do what he might, Malone, who was eager to get to market, kept close behind the carriage. Pikciurniene raged, but nothing helped. And on top of it all, Malone kept talking and laughing as loudly as he could, and constantly mentioning Pluta, Plutiene. . . .

Finally they arrived in Priekule.

Pikciurniene came to Fish Row just as the market flag rose. She quickly bought and tipped into her bag a number of measures of the cheapest kind of fish for the labourers. After all, you had to give them something. Then she returned to the carriage to stow away her purchases.

"Well, and what d'you think you're doing?"

Pikciurna was still sitting on the box, smoking his pipe.

"What d'you want now?"

"Move out of the way, I've got to put the fish in here so the flies won't get at it."

"It'll smell by the time we got home, anyway."

"No, it won't. And are you going to stop up here on the box for everyone to stare at you?"

"Where else shall I go? I keep hearing Maloniene. They stuck right behind us on purpose, so we'd hear them saying: 'Pluta, Pluta, Pluta' all the time."

"You lump of jelly—always afraid, always thinking of what people say! If I were like that we'd be begging our bread, instead of riding in a carriage!"

"We're in a carriage—but people only laugh at us."

He stopped as a cart drawn by a single horse came up. Staigys was driving.

"Look at that, Jurgis—the Pikciurnas! Look what company we've got into!" cried Staigiene's ringing voice. "Well, Busè dear, so you're going to hang Pluta today, are you?"

"I am! And what are you going to do about it?" Pikciurniene snapped.

"Don't start a row with that hag," Staigys warned his wife. "You'll never get the best of her. Don't fret, today she'll hang Pluta, but tomorrow or the day after we'll hang her."

"You'll never live to see the day when you'll hang me, Staigys. The man's not born who can do that. An empty pot makes the most noise, so go on and make all the noise you like."

"Busè! Busè!" Staigiene wanted to try and soften her, but Pikciurniene was gone. There was still sugar to be bought, and Tilsit cheese, and various spices.

She had no time to bother with Staigys, and Pluta too had small place in her thoughts. For today—today Bublīs was to be tried! And this was her doing, hers alone! Pikciurniene was so delighted, so drunk with joy that she wanted to stop, cross herself and sing: "Glory, glory alleluia!" But of course she could hardly do that. Had it been any other day, a Sunday best of all, had there been a service in church, she would have hurried there to thank God for His favour, for having entrusted her and none other with the task of punishing Bublīs' wickedness. If he was sentenced to several years in prison, she would go at once, this very day, and donate a whole fistful of money to the Vangeman or Gosner charities!

The trial was to be at eleven, but Pikciurniene was there by ten. Pikciurna, however, refused to go in so early.

"To have folks gaping at me like some show?" he said.

"Something to gape at!" remarked his wife with biting irony.

It was quite true, Pikciurna had been no beauty to begin with, and now he was getting old—stooping, inclined to baldness, with a pendulous paunch and clothes that fitted where they touched. Pikciurna had no liking for courts in general—especially since the day when he stood up in one face to face with his sister, looked her in the eyes and swore that she was demanding her share of the inheritance a second time, that she had had it long ago.

Pikciurniene walked majestically into the courthouse corridor. She still held herself erect. Her hair, it was true, showed traces of grey. . . . If my hair weren't so dark, there'd be no grey to be seen yet, she thought. Her eyes had not faded, they were as dark as ever. And her face would be unlined too if those neighbours didn't give her so much worry. . . . Pikciurniene looked about her. The other people waiting all fell silent when they saw her.

But her triumphant mood quickly subsided. She did not know where to go next, what to do with herself. She badly wanted to go through one of the many doors—marked "Presiding Judge" or "Inspector" or "Lawyer" or even simply "Office"—some door, any door that was not open to all, to go in for everybody to see it. But her courage failed her. Perhaps she would be treated with politeness; but, perhaps, too, she would be curtly asked what she wanted? It would be so very humiliating to have to crawl back again. Though maybe—the lawyer?

Who were those, over there?

Four people stood in a corner at the end of the corridor, in front of a window with the sunshine streaming in. She ought to go and see who they were—the sunshine blinded her. And she wanted to see. Perhaps she knew them. The worst of it was, they stood with their backs to her, as though they did not want to see her. Pikciurniene coughed. It sounded almost challenging in the quietness of the corridor.

Then suddenly. . . ! If thunder had come down from the blue sky, Pikciurniene would have been less surprised.

"Adornas! But who's at home?"

Yes, it was her farm hand who had offered to be a witness and had evidently been called.

"I'm asking you—who's at home, since you've taken it on yourself to leave?"

"I haven't any home! Not yet!"

"I'm not interested in any home of yours! What I want to know is, who's left in my house, with the horses, with. . ."

"You've got other slaves besides me."

"Well, of all the impudence! Just got up and marched off!"

"What else could I do? You didn't take me in the carriage, so I had to walk it." Adomas clasped his hands behind his back and leaned against the window.

"Who gave you permission? Who told you to come?"

"It's an order from the court!" Adomas shrugged his shoulders. "The order of the court must be obeyed!"

"Who called you as a witness?"

"Pluta," Adomas answered indifferently.

Pikciurniene laughed with angry contempt, but there was a note of alarm too in her laughter.

"And you dare to testify against me? You? You?!" Pikciurniene could not find words sufficiently abusive. She had used them all too often, they were threadbare, devoid of weight, utterly inadequate in the face of this insolence on the part of Adomas. "You curl!" she said finally.

"Cur yourself! I haven't bitten anyone yet."

"And now you think you're going to bite me? You'll break your teeth! Don't—"

It was only now that she saw Trude Bubliene standing beside Adomas, and Pluta with his daughter. What was the girl doing here? What did she want? Was a chit of a girl like that to be a witness?!

"A-a-ah! There's a whole gang here!"

At that moment a door creaked, and a lawyer appeared on the threshold. Seeing Pikciurniene, he bowed, greeted her politely, and taking her elbow, led her into his office. As she passed through the door, she felt as though she were treading a carpet spread out for her feet.

Dear God, what an honour! The lawyer himself taking her by the elbow, and leading her into his office, in front of everybody! As she entered she glanced back just once—was Trude looking? But those ill-conditioned churls had turned to the window again.

Pikciurniene entered the courtroom with her lawyer when everybody else was already seated.

Beyond the barrier were seats for the public. They were all full. She saw Malone and Maloniene, Staigys with his wife, and the Kojelises, and many others whom she knew. And in front of them all, right by the barrier, sat Trude Bubliene.

That was what made it so pleasant to come in with the lawyer.

Pikciurniene seated herself on the chair which the lawyer placed for her with his own hands. She sighed, straightened her kerchief, straightened her dress—she wanted to look as important as she possibly could.

"Let the plaintiff speak!"

The plaintiff was Busà Pikciurniene, *née* Karnelike.

Pikciurniene rose and stood beside her lawyer. . . . How impressive this must look, she thought, her vanity immensely tickled.

The only snag was that she did not know which language to use. She wanted everybody to understand her without any interpreter—the German judges and also the public, many of whom did not know German. . . .

Eh dear, now why can't the judge be Lithuanian?—she sighed inwardly. All the rest are—the two parties and the witnesses, and the audience too!

There was the interpreter—with the pleasant name of Svelnius.¹ He coughed, ready to begin his duties. The secretary examined the end of his pen.

Well, make the best of it, then. Anyhow, she would deliver her speech and everybody would hear it, the speech of Busė Pikciurniene—everybody, Germans and Lithuanians. And she too coughed, straightened her kerchief again and folded her hands.

"I am a farmer, I have a big farm," she began weightily. "God has been my stay and support. By His sacred mercy I have brought the farm almost to an estate. But to my sorrow I have neighbours whom I simply can't get rid of, they'd drown me in a spoonful of water if they could, they'd snatch the last crust from my mouth, and since they can't do that, they try to make my life a misery every way they can."

At this point she turned towards Pluta and Bublīs, sitting in the dock. Her glance passed contemptuously over Pluta's face and came to rest on that of Bublīs. And he answered her look. His eyes seemed to say: You are just a wretched worm! I've trodden on your tail, and soon I'll crush your head!

Pikciurniene stammered and lost the thread of what she wanted to say. The carefully prepared, impressive speech which was to have amazed all broke off short. She tried to collect her thoughts, coughed again, again straightened her kerchief. But it was no good—she could not find a single one of those words she had put together during the night and thought she knew so well.

"Go on, Pikciurniene, let's have some more!" Bublīs encouraged her.

But the presiding judge stopped him. The defendant had not yet the right to speak. He asked Pikciurniene what charge she brought against Pluta.

Ah yes, that was it! But it could not be told in two words, it must all be explained clearly, and in detail. She accused Pluta of purposefully, deliberately and maliciously trying to spite her. Yes, to spite her! He was heavily in debt to her, and the notes of hand she held showed that he no longer had anything to pay with. But in spite of that, in spite of the fact that he could not even pay interest, he deliberately flouted her. Hardly a day passed but he drove his beasts on to her fields. At last her patience gave out and she led his horse into her yard, because it had been turned into her clover; and all this was because he had nowhere to pasture his beasts.

"He's got nothing to feed his children, and he keeps a horse! He must have thought I wouldn't see it. So he feeds his horse till it can eat no more and then takes it back home, as though it were all quite right and proper! But dear Lord in Heaven, is it my fault if he's a beggar, if he's got nothing? All I can say is—why does a man keep a horse when he can't feed it? Spawned a houseful of children, and then comes round looking miserable with his 'Give! Give!' Why is it that decent, solid farmers don't have all those children?"

Since this serious, weighty question received no answer, she thought for a moment, and concluded: "Well, then, I charge Pluta with pastur-

¹ Svelnius—affectionate

ing his beasts on my fields, and Bublís with taking, with stealing, a horse I had impounded."

With those words she took her seat again.

The first witness to be examined was Benagys of Benagai, a stout man with a round, pleasant face and the comfortable assurance that he was invariably right, and that he could never say an unsuitable word because he was always courteous. He looked at Pluta with commiseration and began his testimony.

He had been walking beside the irrigation ditch on his way to visit the village elder when he had seen Pluta driving a horse towards the boundary of Pikciurniene's field. (He stressed the word *Pikciurniene*.) It was a field of oats. And everybody knew her fields were the best in Benagai. Of course as soon as the horse saw the oats it plunged in, trailing the rope and stake behind it, and disappeared in them, because the oats were so tall.

"But *Pikciurniene* said she found the horse in the clover!" Bublís put in.

The presiding judge again called him to order—more sharply this time.

Benagys was confused, but *Pikciurniene* quickly came to his rescue.

"But that's how it was!" she hurried to explain. "The horse must have been in the oats first. Yes, I remember now. It fed there till it had eaten all it could, and then it went in to the clover and ate it all. It was there all night."

"What a horse! Five elephants couldn't have done all the damage one little horse has done!" Bublís interrupted again.

Thereupon the judge shouted that if he, Bublís, dared to speak one more word he would be removed and charged with contempt of court.

"But I'm in prison already!" Bublís retorted.

The judge affected not to hear that, and *Pikciurniene* made a quick mental somersault and corrected herself.

"It didn't eat up all on the field, of course, but it trampled it and spoiled it. It was there the whole night! And the horse is a young one, it started rolling in the oats. A pity they're reaped now, or you could have gone there yourself, Your Honour, you'd have seen that the oats were ruined. All the ears broken—at least, nearly all," she corrected herself. "Well, so I led that horse home and tied it up in the yard. And then all of a sudden I saw Pluta come along with Bublís, take the horse and lead it away. And I hadn't asked a thing of Pluta except that he pay for the damage done, and I'd put it quite low. That's the sort of person I am. I wouldn't hurt a fly, or tread on a worm if I could help it, let alone being hard on a human being. But I want everything fair, I want right and justice. But what did Pluta do? He just laughed at me, jeered at me, brought Bublís along and took the horse. . . . And as for what that Bublís said—! Your Honour, it's all written down, you have it there. And I want to ask you—has that out-at-elbows beggar the right to insult me?"

So that the law and justice should be fully observed, the judge called one more witness, *Vainoriene*. She entered with rapid steps and halted before the table, prepared for anything.

"What do you know about the case?" she was asked.

"Who—me?"

"Yes."

"I know that Mrs. Pikciurniene found Pluta's horse in her clover."

"Did you see that the horse was in the clover?"

"What—me? Yes, I saw it!"

"What else did you see?"

"What else did I see?"

"Did you see how the horse got there?"

"Yes, I saw Pluta lead the horse out of the stable late at night." To make it sound more realistic, she added: "Now think for yourself what sort he is! He rode up to Pikciurniene's boundary, looked round, then took off the bridle, gave the horse a slap and drove it right into Pikciurniene's clover."

"Are you quite sure of all that? Perhaps he didn't ride the horse, but walked it and then sent it into the clover?"

"He sent the horse into the clover, and then ran off home as quick as he could."

"But didn't he drive the horse into the oats?"

"What—the oats? No, this is the first time I've heard of any oats!" the witness confessed innocently.

There was a burst of laughter in the hall.

The presiding judge first touched the bell, then rang it loudly. When the laughter had died down somewhat, he announced that he would order the court cleared if silence was not preserved; at the same time he made a gesture and the witness sat down, red as a lobster. She did not notice that Bublione was sitting just behind her, on the other side of the barrier.

"How much did Pikciurniene pay you for that tale?" Trude asked, leaning over the barrier to speak into the witness' ear. The woman started and turned white as a sheet.

"Was it you asked me that?"

But now Pluta was called. The courtroom was very quiet. All eyes were fixed on the defendant as he rose—miserable, tormented, stooping, with reddened eyes and grey, unshaven face, to speak, to defend himself. But he had never been in a courtroom before, he had never had to stand up in front of such important gentlemen, and he would rather have sunk through the earth, he would rather have been struck dumb for ever, than make a speech in his own defence. Oh, why was he so poor, why could he not pay a lawyer to speak for him? That was the only thought in his mind. His hands trembled, his lips moved but no sound came out. It looked as though there and then, in front of everybody, he was about to fall on his knees before his tormentor, before Pikciurniene, and plead for mercy. But, no, he did not kneel, it only looked as though he might—but one cannot always judge a man's intentions by his outward looks.

"What can you say in your defence?"

The judge's tone was loftily offhand; evidently he saved his courtesy for those who did not come with empty hands. Pluta who brought no bribe had little to hope for.

"Why is Mrs. Pikciurniene so unjust?" Pluta answered. "The time will come when she too will have to answer before the throne of God!"

Bublis nudged him and whispered—so that only Pluta could hear: "Simpleton!"

But Pluta could not understand why he was a simpleton; after all, if he called on God's name, they ought to understand that he was an honest man. What else was there for him to do? No, he had not let his horse into

either the oats or the clover, it was God's truth. He had never even thought of such a thing. He was a God-fearing man and never tried to take what wasn't his, and never would.

"What?!" cried Pikciurniene. "I take God as my witness that everything was exactly as I have said! May God strike me dead where I stand if I have lied! . . . Well? You see, Pluta, I'm still alive! Are you trying to say my witnesses are lying? Do you want a charge of slander too, on top of the other? I myself told them to say nothing but the truth. Who dare say that Mr. Benagys lies!"

Pikciurniene sat down again, sure that she had been both weighty and convincing—after all, the lawyer himself had nodded at her approvingly.

"But all the same, Mrs. Pikciurniene, all this isn't only because of the horse! That's just—that's just. . . ." Pluta looked helplessly at Bublīs. "How can I say it? . . . It's that you want to drive me off my farm, and that's why you've started all this about the horse."

"Crazy!"

"I've nothing more to say. You talk, Pikciurniene, all you want!"

Pikciurniene was quite ready to open her mouth again, but after all, the court does have its order of procedure, so the judge hastily began to question Bublīs—what did he want in Pikciurniene's yard and why did he interfere in things that weren't his business?

"Why wasn't it my business?" asked Bublīs. "How could I let a poor man be treated like that? And why do you allow Pikciurniene to go on lying?"

"You will please keep to the point, Bublīs! It's not for you to say who's lying and who isn't!"

"But I say again—she's lying, and lying impudently. Pluta spoke the truth—she's started all this fuss about a horse just because she wants somehow or other to drive a neighbour she hates off his farm. The end justifies the means. And the best man on earth can't live in peace if a vindictive neighbour won't let him."

"Bublīs!"

"Very well, very well, we'll talk about the horse. . . . I went with Pluta to the field to take a look at that so-called damage, that terrible loss. I did not see any clover trampled or crushed or eaten. As for oats—nobody had ever heard of them then. The oats are quite a new idea, presented here for the first time by the highly honoured Benagys of Benagai. The clover was flowering, and I didn't see a single broken stalk. And now, Gentlemen, allow me to ask how something else could have happened. When Pluta went to look for his horse, he found the peg to which it had been tied still in the ground, just as he had driven it in, and the end of a rope dangling from it. At first he thought the horse really had broken the rope and run off. But when we looked at it together, we saw that it had been cut. . . . Now—the first witness said that he saw Pluta pull the peg out of the ground and drive the horse into the oats, dragging the rope and peg after it. And the most honoured witness Vainoriene, whom nobody has ever seen in Benagai, says that Pluta rode to the field. . . . Gentlemen, please take note—Pluta rode to the field, took off the bridle, and so far as we can understand from her words, drove the horse into Pikciurniene's clover without any rope on. As for the oats, she's never even heard of them. . . . Pikciurniene, why did you cut the rope the horse was tied

with, and how much did you promise your witnesses for committing perjury?"

"What business is that of yours, you dirty Spartakist?"

"Aha! Did you hear that?" Bubliss turned to the public. There was a stir in the courtroom.

"Pikciurniene! I really would like to know why you cut the rope?"

"Did you see me do it?"

"A blind man could see it. . . ."

At this point the presiding judge broke in again with "I warn you for the last time. Confine yourself to the case, and answer the question—why did you interfere in other people's business!"

"To help Pluta, of course!"

"And against your wife's own sister?" cried Pikciurniene, forgetting herself. "You shameless rascal!"

"What!" Bubliss seemed thoroughly amazed. "Have I become a relation again all of a sudden? You yourself said we weren't relations any more, and I was very glad to hear it. But there's one more thing I can tell you: I wouldn't defend my own sister if she'd got up to such vile tricks. . . ."

"You haven't got a sister! You're a monster! You—no, I won't lower myself to talk about you! Your Honour, don't let that villain go on!" she screamed. "Can't you see he's starting to agitate for that—that—what's it called?—for Communism! Can't you see he's making revolution? He can't stand seeing that I've got something and he's a beggar! That's why he's defending another beggar! They'd rob us and plunder us and kill us all if there weren't the police and the courts to defend us poor farmers. Who knows what might have happened to us if Bubliss hadn't been arrested at once, that very same day! He'd have broken all my poor bones!"

Pikciurniene felt so sorry for her poor bones that she began to weep.

"Can I ever forget how he threatened me?! He might take and burn the whole farm down, or even worse than that! . . . What was he doing all that time in Berlin? Why was he so long coming back? No need to ask—he was murdering people there. And now he's come to murder us all too. . . ."

"Your Honour, why doesn't Pikciurniene confine herself to the case?" asked Bubliss and continued: "I wouldn't dirty my hands with such as Pikciurniene, though she ought to be crushed like the poisonous snake she is!"

"You hear that, you hear what he says?" screamed Pikciurniene.

"The days of bloodsuckers like that are numbered. . . ."

"Remove Bubliss at once!" shouted the presiding judge. "His case will be handed over to the public prosecutor!"

"Ah!" Pikciurniene had been on thorns all the time Bubliss had been speaking. She sat down with a sigh of relief.

But the public, who had been showing signs of disturbance for some time, now made themselves heard.

"Let him speak!"

"Let him go on!"

"Why d'you gag a man who tells the truth?"

"Down with the wealthy! Long live justice!"

The judge rang his bell frantically, then banged the table with his fist.

"Clear the court at once and shut the doors! This is a trial, not a political meeting!" he shouted.

As Bublīs was taken out, he turned and called to the people in his vibrant voice: "Never mind! Flies bite worse in autumn before they die!"

A roar of approval answered him. Then a big detachment of police seemed to spring up from nowhere. Pushing and cursing, they drove the people out.

Bublīs was put into solitary confinement.

"He can agitate the walls all he likes," remarked the governor of the prison.

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Trude Bublīene followed her husband at a little distance right up to the prison gates. As though he felt her near presence, he turned round as he passed through. Their eyes met, and Trude returned to the courthouse almost elated.

A crowd of people were still waiting before the building. Everybody wanted to know how the Pluta case would end.

Was it possible Pikciurniēne could win? Anybody could see her claims were weak and her witnesses bribed. That was the general opinion of the people standing round about the door.

Half an hour passed, or perhaps more—nobody looked at the clock—and then Pluta came out. He was staggering, and laughing uncontrollably.

"Pikciurniēne's driven a man mad now!" somebody gasped.

Pluta swayed and staggered down the steps as though drunk, clutching at the banisters so as not to fall. And he laughed and laughed! His shaking head hung on his chest and tears fell in bright drops from his eyes. Trude Bublīene ran up the steps to meet him and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Martynas, you mustn't. You're a man, don't let yourself cry because of a creature like that! All's not lost yet! We'll get justice somehow!"

"Nay, I'm laughing! Can't you see? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha!"

"The comedy is over," said Staigys, coming up to them. "If it weren't such a murderous one, you really could laugh."

"Pull yourself together, Martynas, I tell you!" Trude could find nothing more to say, tears were rising in her own eyes.

Just then Adomas emerged and came up to Pluta.

"What devil's work's been going on here? Why weren't your witnesses called? Anè? Me?"

"They were afraid you might say the same thing my husband did," Trude answered. "And maybe more. . . . And it might have ended with one strong labourer the less for Pikciurniēne."

"Pik-ciur-nienel! Pik-ciur-nienel!" Busè mimicked her sister, as she came down the steps; she had heard the last word. "Well, has Pikciurniēne shown you what she can do?"

Then she saw the laughing Pluta. But she did not see the tears streaming from his eyes, just as she had not seen Anè Plutike weeping in the courthouse corridor.

"Huh—you'll be laughing the other side of your face when you come to your senses a bit! . . . Adomas, you still here? You ought to have been home long ago."

"I won't set foot in your house again if you beg me on your knees!"



"I'll find another man, then. You can go and work for Pluta if you like! You wanted to be his witness, didn't you?"

"One of these days you'll see the witness I'll be!"

The crowd parted grudgingly to let Pikciurniene through. She looked at the faces as she passed. But nowhere could she find sympathy or approval. She heard only an ominous murmur and loud cries: "Blood-sucker!" "Fiend!" "Leech!"

Pikciurniene's composure cracked.

"Who's a leech? Who's a blood-sucker?" she cried. "Whose blood have I ever sucked? What d'you want of me? I simply defend my rights!"

And in such a blissful moment, leaving the courthouse after defeating a bitterly hated enemy, pocketing his land and gaining more wealth, after being treated with such respect, proudly conscious of being envied by all—why else would they shout?—to go and stumble!

Pikciurniene stumbled, and fell.

"Beak in the gutter!" someone cried, and then they all laughed.

"That was the little Pluta boy shot Pikciurniene into the mud! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Pikciurniene clutched at the earth with both hands, then quickly raised her eyes, trying to understand what had happened.

What—how—how was that? Nobody'd ever managed to trip up Pikciurniene before, and then that little cub did it!

Amid roars of laughter she got to her feet again; she needed to push her hair out of her eyes and straighten her kerchief which was all on one side, but there was no time to bother about that—first she must deal with that brat.

"You wait, you young devil!"

Pikciurniene grabbed at the boy, but he twisted out of her clutch like

an eel and ran off, stopping to hop about on one foot and jeer at her frantic efforts to catch him.

"See that?" someone hooted. "Pikciurniene wants to take a kid to court now!"

There was a roar of laughter. "But he hasn't any land, Pikciurniene!"

She did not catch the boy, of course, he disappeared as though the earth had swallowed him. She ran to her carriage which stank to Heaven of rotting fish. She did not wait for her husband but seized the reins and standing, lashed the horses and galloped out of Priekule.

The horses ran at top speed, overtaking people on their way home from market. Pedestrians stopped and stared open-mouthed after the carriage driven by a woman standing at her full height, her hair flying in the wind, her kerchief on one side, her face dirty and her eyes protruding wildly. Leaning forward over the box, she lashed the horses again and again. The carriage flew like the wind, leaving a cloud of dust and a stink.

That laughter! . . . God! If only Maloniene had not been there, if only the Kojelises, Staigyses—and Trude—had not seen it all! But there they all were, as though for spite. What were they expecting, the out-at-elbows rascallions? . . . One thing was good, though, they had seen her victory today! But then that brat had to go and play such a trick!

Just think of it! Now, where was the respect due to his elders and betters, to solid, respectable people? Evidently even a laurel wreath has its thorns, and the best wine holds a drop of bitterness. . . .

The servants were amazed when the carriage came thundering into the yard. Pikciurniene was now seated, but she was still covered with mud and her hair disordered (she had lost her kerchief on the way); the sides of the foam-spattered horses were heaving wildly.

"Did the horses bolt?" a sharp-tongued girl called Elze Perkunike asked innocently. "Where's Pikciurna?"

"None of your business. . . . Take the fish out from under the box and clean it. It's for your dinner tomorrow."

Elze started rummaging in the carriage.

"Where is it, that fish?"

"What's that you're holding, wench?"

"Call that fish? It's carrion. We're not going to eat that! Eat it yourself, if you think it's so good!"

"That's enough! You'll find yourselves eating plain potatoes yet, you ill-conditioned scum!"

That night Pikciurna came home on foot, very late. He had evidently been ploughing with his nose, as the saying goes, for he was as wet and muddy as though he had lain in every ditch he passed.

"Has the foul fiend got into you, rolling you in the dirt? Pity he didn't break your neck!"

"I've c-come safe, all ri'. B-but you, it'll take an axe to finish you off! Beat your face in!" the loving husband said thickly. "How did ye like it today? Suit you? Ran off all d-dirty! Heel! Heel! Heel!"

Pikciurniene gritted her teeth. She did not want a quarrel just now, her mind was occupied by something else. But what that something was she could hardly have told anybody, she hardly even knew clearly.

On returning from the courthouse, Pikciurniene had suddenly discovered an interesting thing—she could see Pluta's cottage quite well

through the trees from her own house. How was it she had never noticed that before? But today, as though something had drawn her, she had gone over to one of the windows, looked out and seen it.

There was nothing special about it. A clay hut with a thatched roof. The straw was weathered, in some places the bare rafters showed through. Something white gleamed on the window—probably a piece of paper replacing a broken pane. Apart from that the window was dead black, and looked deep as a precipice.

Of course it looked like that now, when Pikciurniene had not yet crossed the threshold. But then . . . then!

Again the drop of bitterness! A cluster of children were sitting by the cottage. And they just kept on sitting there. No matter how often Pikciurniene looked out—and she looked out frequently—she always saw that cluster of children. Dusk fell, then darkness, and still they were there.

Among them was a little girl in a red kerchief. She would jump up, run about and then sit down again in the very middle, as though afraid of something.

Yes, how old had Trude been then? Five, maybe, not more. And she looked exactly like that one, over there. . . .

For some moments Busè Pikciurniene forgot all around her; she was back in the far distant days of her youth.

It was a holiday of some kind, and the whole family had gone away. Only she, Busè, the eldest, had stayed to mind the house, and Trude, the youngest, had been left in her care. Busè fed the cattle with little Trude running after her all the time. . . . That was all there was to it, nothing at all, really! Only Busè suddenly saw Trude before her, as she had been then. She had been so small and slight, with a grey frock that was too long and twisted round her legs when she ran. Her grey stockings were in holes, and the bare flesh peeped out from her clogs. How those clogs clattered when she ran (looking at Pluta's little girl running about, Pikciurniene could almost hear the clatter of clogs).

Trude always wanted Busè to be pleased with her, so she began talking about things Busè would like.

"Busè, dear Busè, when you get on in the world" (Busè always spoke of getting on in the world) "will you be rich?"

"Well, what do you think!"

"I'll be big too, then, Busè—as big as that—" she raised her hands as high as they would go. "And then I'll say: 'Busè, you go and rest, and I'll feed the pigs and milk the cows! . . . ' Busè, don't run away from me!"

Little Trude was afraid of the darkness, especially dark corners, and dusk was falling. So she ran after Busè and clutched at her skirt.

"Busè, when you're afraid to be alone in the dark I'll take you with me."

They went into the cow-house. All the corners there were terribly dark. Busè wanted to give her sister a scare, so she tore herself away, ran out into the yard and hid. Trude, terribly frightened, ran after her, but the shed had a high threshold, very high for the little girl. She put one hand on it, got a leg over, then the other—and fell right down in the mud. She got up again very quickly so that Busè should not see. . . . But then she found that she was all dirty, and wet through. She wiped her hands on her muddy frock; they were so cold and red that they stood out against the dark material like little maple leaves in autumn.

Busè ran to her and struck her on the back.

"I'll teach you to roll about in the dirt! Go straight home and sit on the stove-top, I tell you! Why d'you have to keep following me round like a puppy?"

Trude's eyes were weeping, but her little mouth was smiling and she tried her best to please her sister. She no longer ventured to hold on to Busè's skirt, however, so she ran along in front or behind. And her cold hands, and her little bare heels, and the kerchief on top—all were red. . . .

Pikciurniene passed both hands over her face.

Of all the silly things to think of! All that's needed now is to start snivelling. . . . No, I'm not doing anything like that. But why do those children keep sitting there, like grit in my eye? As though someone had put them there for spite, to—to make me. . . .

Pikciurniene did not dare follow up that thought to the end. She would have liked to send somebody to drive the children away, drive them off with a whip if need be.

But Heavens, who would do it? And she couldn't go herself!

Before she went to bed she took another look, although she could not expect to see anything now that it was dark. But she did see something. A light, a weak, lonely, flickering light that disappeared and then appeared again.

As soon as she was in bed she heard again that loud laughter, she thought she could even hear Maloniene's voice saying: "Pikciurniene! Pikciurniene!"

"Ugh—the bitch!"

Jumping out of bed, Pikciurniene threw something over her shoulders and ran out into the yard, to the gate separating the Pikciurna house from the Malones'. But nobody was there, nobody at all. The windows were dark, the house silent.

Not a single living soul in sight.

I must be going crazy, she thought. I'll be seeing ghosts next, and running about the fields!

Pikciurniene was thoroughly angry with herself.

As she was falling asleep, she again heard the voice of her lawyer. How beautifully he had spoken! Every word went straight to the heart. And the things he had said about such creatures as Bubliss and Pluta: "A pestilent seed brought from the east—" yes, that was what he said—"already brought from the east into our country. . . . The seed called Communism. If we do not stamp it down. . . ." What else did he say? Well, yes, he didn't say much, but it was very fine and full of a lot of new words that even the interpreter did not know. So Pikciurniene had not understood it all. But that he was against men like Bubliss, this she had understood well enough.

And that Pluta!—Pikciurniene laughed sleepily. They made him stand to hear the decision read, and the way he flopped down—!

At this point Pikciurna returned and interrupted her musings.

What was up with him? It wasn't the first time he had been drunk, but he had never stammered before. . . .

When Pikciurna fell asleep at the table and then rolled on to the floor, Pikciurniene went to take another look through the window.

The light in Pluta's hut still flickered. . . .



PART TWO

1

The years were passing. The daughters of Karnelis of Benagai were getting old. And these years had brought many events.

Barbe Snekutiene became a matchmaker and often visited clients for whom she had found suitable partners. It was quite a pleasant, carefree life. But as she got old, things became worse because the young men learned to find wives themselves and no longer went to a matchmaker.

Snekutis had been a hard worker in his youth and earned good money. Summer and winter he found odd jobs in addition to running his farm, to keep his family well off and his wife contented. He tried to save a bit for his old age too, but nothing came of that. People said it was Barbe's fault, she was idle and thought only of getting new clothes, hanging all kinds of trinkets on herself, eating well, sleeping late and gossiping.

Misfortunes came. Their daughter had a baby when she was little more than a child herself. That was because of the war, with soldiers about everywhere. . . . The elder son came back from the front lacking a leg. The second son fell off a table when he was a child, hurt his head and remained an idiot for the rest of his life; he could not go to school, he could do no work, only wandered about the fields and played with the children. They could not send him to a home because that would cost money.

"And where are we to get it?" Snekutiene wept.

With all these troubles, Snekutis took to drink; there were times when he did not know his own name.

Six months after that memorable trial when Pikciurniene put Pluta off his farm, Bublīs returned from prison.

He found his wife and child in the direst want. Trude was working for anyone who would hire her, waiting patiently for his return. With hard toil she earned enough to hire a horse for bringing in fuel for the winter, and to buy seed potatoes. She had to work several weeks for the right to use three or four furrows of land and a scrap of poor pasture for the goat. And a centner or two of grain cost her not weeks, but months of work. Women's labour was cheap, the farmers wanted men. A woman's work was paid only half as much as a man's.

But this was not the worst of it.

People began avoiding Trude.

"The wife of that convict Bublīs. . . ."

"That jail-bird Bubliss' wife's been here again. . . . Begging. . . ."

"Let her go to her Reds. Why does she come crawling round us?"

"She says she'll work it off."

"Work it off? When? To give her anything's like throwing it in the water. Except that you'd see bubbles there. But with her—! And a child, too! Feed the pair of them! Tell her we've got all the hands we need."

That was how the rich farmers talked of Trude Bubliss.

Of course there were people who would gladly have helped her—but they themselves were squeezed by the big men. They had no land of their own and could give neither bread nor work. They lived from hand to mouth as it was. But even Malone, Kojelis and other small farmers began to avoid Bubliss too. "Just to be on the safe side," they said.

Her only real friends were the Staigyses. They themselves were not very well off, but they helped Trude Bubliss all they could. She and Viktoriukas were like part of the family.

When Bubliss came home, he found work on a bridge-building job. But it did not last long. Somebody told the boss he was agitating the workers to demand higher wages and to strike if they were refused.

Troubles never come singly.

Bubliss went off to look for work somewhere else. For three days there was no news of him and Trude was beside herself with anxiety.

Then one day as she sat worrying beside the child's bed, the landlord Raudonis burst into the room without knocking.

"I've been patient all these years and said nothing!" he shouted. "But now I've had enough! I've had enough, I tell you, Bubliss!"

Trude guessed at once what it was all about and to tell the truth was rather alarmed, but did not show it. She summoned all her will power, controlled herself and answered not without irony: "Are you feeling ill, Master?"

"Ill? You've got the impudence to laugh at me?"

"Why, of course not!"

"When I tell you what I'm sick of, you won't feel so much like laughing. All through the war I got no good out of this house at all. When I needed a labourer I hadn't one. But I didn't say anything. It's the war, I thought, what's to be done! But Bubliss came back at last—and how much use was he to me? First thing, he was behind bars! And all the neighbours talking—why do I keep a Spartakist, a jail-bird? I've stood it a long time because I'm a Christian! Now I've had enough!"

"But prisons are built for men, not dogs!" Trude laughed. "You might find yourself there some day too. It can happen to anyone. Don't be too sure it won't happen to you!"

"None of your sauce! Get out of here, the quicker the better! Where's Bubliss? I want to speak to him."

"Why? Haven't you said it all to me?"

"I don't bargain with women."

"I'm not bargaining. Don't think that Jurgis is going to ask anything of you. And remember one thing—we've paid you ten times as much as this hut is worth—this heap of clay. In all justice it's been ours a long time, not yours. But don't be afraid, don't worry, we'll go away and make you a present of it! The floor's rotten, the ceiling's falling down, the roof leaks. You never thought it necessary to repair your hut. You only

squeezed money out of us, and pushed more work on to us than an ox could get through! We're going, Raudonis! Good-bye!"

Raudonis felt more than uncomfortable—for Bubliene had spoken some very unpalatable truths.

"You know me, I'm not a hard man!" he started to justify himself. "But the neighbours. . . Well, I've told you—you can have fourteen days' notice. . . . Pikciurniene, your sister—she's looking for labourers. And there's Pluta's cottage, I heard there are two rooms empty. . . ."

But Bubliene picked up the child and went out of the room.

Bublis returned in high spirits. He had found work somewhere near the city.

Without waiting for the two weeks to expire, the Bublises went away to the new job.

The Silbakises removed to the city as well.

"Got to give the children some schooling," Silbakis explained when Busè attacked him.

She had come storming over as soon as she heard of her sister's intended departure. She thoroughly disapproved.

"Why don't you send them out to work?" she panted.

"To you, maybe? Ha! Ha! Ha! That would just suit you, wouldn't it! You'd be saying: 'It's all in the family! Why should I pay them? They ought to be glad I've taken them in and given them work. I feed them, don't I?' No, Busè dear, don't hope for it! Not on your life! I've worked for other people all my days, and all my days I've eaten black crusts! I've had enough of it! I want my children to have something better. . . ."

"A nice idea! So you think it'll be heaven in the city, eh? And me, how much of that white bread d'you think I eat?"

Pikciurniene wanted to strike the table with her fist, but remembered why she had come, swallowed her rage, put on a smile and asked whether Silbakis would sell her the farm. It was only a small one, of course, and not worth much. But after all—such close relations! And in the city it would always come in handy to get a centner of potatoes or a sack of flour over and above wages. . . .

"I'd never grudge anything. You ought to know what a good heart I have."

"Oh, we've known that a long time!"

That jeering tone that devil used! If only she could have knocked the words down his throat! But she had to let it pass. "You see, then!" Busè continued. "So why. . ."

"It's sold!" Magdè answered curtly.

"And for a good price," Silbakis added. "They didn't even haggle."

"What did you get? Maybe I wouldn't have haggled either."

"You? You wouldn't have haggled?! You'd have made us crawl on our knees before you'd have let a groschen out of your hand. And why should I do that? I'm still strong and healthy. I can fend for myself and my family too."

"Well, go then, in God's name! You'll just find yourself in prison like Bublis! I'll have a good laugh at you then!"

"Go along, go along, 'in God's name!'" said Silbakis, showing plainly that so far as he was concerned the talk was ended.

Pikiurniene marched out and slammed the door so that the window rattled.

Silbakis did not go to prison. He kept out of politics, went nowhere, and visited even Bublís rarely, only when some reason took him. He had stopped drinking long before and devoted himself only to his family, but his miserable farm had not been enough to keep them. He got thoroughly sick of going to wealthy farmers and begging for work as though it were some favour. The endless taxes which only a big farm could carry were gradually ruining him. That was why he followed Bublís to the city. There, too, they did not live on white bread and cake, but at least the people seemed to understand and help each other more. He landed among workers. Outwardly everything seemed much the same as it had been. People toiled and lived their lives, usually in want. But if you looked more closely, it was plain that in the city some sort of movement was spreading for a better lot for all.

Silbakis began to see everything with new eyes.

"If a man wasn't tied hand and foot with inborn prejudices," he burst out one day, "then with a brother-in-law like Bublís you could be something!"

But how was one to "be something"? What did the phrase mean to Silbakis? He himself could hardly have said. No, he still understood little, very little of what was going on round about him.

"Why's there unemployment?" he pondered. "It's done on purpose! And it's such a rascally trick, you want to bash their faces in, those villains!"

"That's what it is—workers are sacked so they won't think of striking! So the ones that are working will be so glad to have a job of any kind, they'll rack themselves to bits for a few groschen! That's how the bosses see it. And if in spite of it any of them do strike, for every one out there'll be ten others waiting to snap up the job!"

Bublís was soon busy. He went to meetings and spoke at them himself. He was not an eloquent speaker, but what he did say was sincere and convincing. And he never promised easy success.

"The fight will most certainly be a long one, we shall often stumble and often fall," he said. "But that doesn't matter. We must get up and go on again. The main thing is not to lose heart!"

Eh, Bublís, Bublís, thought Silbakis. If people are taken and put in prison for that, then it's more than child's play. But whether it'll all lead to anything better—that's another question!

One day when Silbakis was saying something of the kind, Bublís lost his temper a little.

"Hasn't it got into your head yet, Marcíus, why they hunt us and clap us into prison? It's because they're afraid of us! They can see the workers aren't such sheep as they once were. And they see the time's past when the workers let the Social-Democrats speak for them—those Social-Democrats who always looked at the rich men and never opened their mouths without permission. Now the workers are beginning to listen to us Communists. That's why the bosses are setting their dogs on us. And that, Marcíus, is why we've got to be strong. We mustn't get weak-kneed, and then things will move."

Silbakis made no answer.

Magdè Silbakiene sat on the edge of the bed crying.

Her eldest daughter, Marta, sat on another bed, near the door. The younger children were asleep. Marta stared fixedly at the tiny lamp flickering dimly on the table. The rusty pendulum of the old clock on the wall swayed lazily but persistently back and forth, back and forth, ticking off minutes and hours. The clock wheezed, then gave ten loud strokes. Outside a heavy silence brooded, as though the city were dead.

As long as daylight lasted, people had gathered in groups on the pavement or run to the windows. But it was a side-street with little to see. Then in the evening the lights had suddenly gone out. The only tap in the house went dry. Policemen began marching up and down outside. That was when Magdè Silbakiene gave way to depression.

Oh, why had they ever left Benagiai!

She put the children to bed without any supper, drew the curtains closely, locked the door and sat down on the bed.

Marta remembered that somewhere or other there ought to be a tiny lamp, brought from Benagiai. She found it, lighted it and put it on the table. It made things a little less frightening.

How could you help being afraid when times were so troubled and you never knew what might happen to you at any minute! It wasn't so long since there had been firing in various parts of the city, after the French left. Only three or four months.

One day when Bublīs came to see them, Silbakis said not without pride: "Now we Lithuanians will be the masters of our own country."

"M'yes . . . masters! . . . Dunderhead! You ought to know by this time—horse-radish is no sweeter than radish!"

Bublīs was right. Nothing got any better. The new government of Lithuania only issued edicts and threats: "State of Emergency!" "Death penalty!"

"Don't cry! After all, we don't know anything yet," Marta tried to comfort her mother. "Maybe everything's quite all right, and you're frightening yourself for nothing!"

"Be quiet!"

Magdè could say no more. She dissolved in tears.

In the ordinary way she never snapped at her children, but now she could not contain herself. Her whole being was concentrated on listening. She wanted to be the first to hear his footsteps. Of course there was little hope, it was eleven already. But—who could say? Listening tensely, she let her mind travel back over the years. And remembering all the past, began to feel very sorry for herself. Indeed, the life of Magdè Silbakiene had been filled with care and trouble. Three children—when you've said that you've said everything! And only a year's difference between them. One barely out of nappies—and there was the next. The second still in the cradle, and a third came. The one not ready to leave it and the other demanding it. The one crying in this corner, the other in that. And then—illness. They had all had scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough. If one got ill, then they all went down—as though especially to plague her. You couldn't call a doctor or take them to one. And there was never any money.

How much had Marcius ever earned? So she had to leave the children to look after themselves and go out to work too.

After all—it's no joke, to feed and clothe three children. You couldn't send them to school in rags. No, Magdè Silbakiene's children had always been clean and neat. The teacher was for ever nagging at the children from poor families—for grubby hands, or black nails, or dirty ears, or no handkerchief. He'd always find something! And follow it up with a whole sermon in German. And a ruler on their hands, likely as not! But he could never find anything to pick on in Magdè Silbakiene's children. And it was all thanks to her efforts. Because she lived only for her family. She would sit up at night, washing and mending. Sometimes she was so tired she dropped the needle or began turning the handle of the sewing machine the wrong way. Marcius would half wake up and grumble drowsily: "Aren't you ever coming to bed?"

But she could not go to bed, she must finish the work for which she had had no time during the day.

Ah, no! You couldn't blame Marcius, she thought. Heaven forbid! And if he did get drunk now and then, well, he's a man, where's the man that doesn't drink? But he always thought of his wife and children. Often when he got paid he'd buy us something extra—a bit of stuff to make me a blouse, or frocks for the girls, or something for the boy. Even if it was only gingham. Where could he get the money for silk! It would be good if no woman ever had a worse husband than him, or children a worse father! Of course he did go wenching once. Well, he was young! Nothing surprising in that, after all I'm no raging beauty! And there's plenty of hussies running about only trying to catch a man somehow. . . . He confessed it all and asked me to forgive him, and it never happened again. . . .

"Who's that, Mother?" Marta asked suddenly, breaking into her thoughts.

Magdè listened—maybe it really was. . .

"Who can it be? Dad never knocks loudly like that. . . . Listen. What if it's the police? Mother, don't let them in!"

But the neighbour went and opened the outer door.

"What's happening? Is everyone crazy in this town? Do the Silbakises live here?"

"What ill wind's brought her?"

The door opened and Pikciurniene burst in.

"Here I am, the Lord be praised. Good evening. I suppose I'm the last person you expected to see?" she said with a short laugh. "Let me sit down, at least. I'm not moving another step today. . . . But what's this? Why've you been crying, Magdè? What's happened?"

"Father went out this morning and he's not come back yet."

Marta did not like her aunt, in fact she could not stand her, but even Pikciurniene was a welcome sight just now—it had been very frightening, sitting there waiting.

"He'll turn up all right. Probably lying drunk somewhere. Wouldn't be the first time."

"Busè, don't talk like that, you don't understand," said Silbakiene.

"Why mustn't I talk like that? Everyone knows what your Silbakis is. Oh, of course you stick up for him! You'd put your hand in the fire and swear he can't do a thing wrong! But don't say I didn't warn you."

"Be quiet, I tell you! You don't know! People aren't allowed out in the streets after nine, and he's not home. Do you understand what that means?"

"What's there to understand? Martial law or whatever it is. . . . Eh dear me, if you only knew all I've been through this evening! Better not ask!"

Nobody did ask. Magdè, wholly possessed by apprehension, had not moved from the bed. Marta was angry with her aunt for speaking so disparagingly of her father; she undressed, got into bed and turned to the wall.

So Pikciurniene launched on the tale herself.

The next morning she had to see the tax assessor.

"All these accursed taxes. . . . And you can't make Pikciurna go anywhere, it's all left to me, I have to do everything. . . ."

So this afternoon she had set off for the city.

As a matter of fact, the taxes ought to have been paid the previous autumn. "But you know how muddled everything was then. Those zemaitises came along and I had to stick close to the house like a dog on a chain. Meikis was running about with tales of some sort of rebellion. Even our neighbour, that good-for-nothing Malone, started talking big. Eh dear me, what a time! The assessor hasn't been after me lately, that's true, there's not a sound out of him, everyone's waiting for the new currency—lits or something. And I'm afraid they'll clap on such a tax in those lits that I'll never be able to pay it. I want to pay now, in marks. They're worth nothing anyway."

But passengers who got into the train on the way had been whispering about something. From words she caught here and there she had understood that the night before some workers—Communists; of course!—had overturned the monuments erected to Wilhelm I and Queen Luise. Raving mad, they must be! Overturning monuments! What harm were monuments doing?

"High time, too!" cried Marta from under the blanket; her patience had snapped.

"What d'you mean?"

"I mean it's high time to throw out that Prussian, that Queen Luise. D'you know what she stands for?"

"It was a memorial. . . . What could she stand for? Don't you start thinking that by overturning monuments here, you'll stop Germany getting to her feet again! She'll show you something yet!"

"You should have taken a better look at that Prussian. You'd have seen how she was staring out to the east! That means the *Drang nach Osten*! But now she's not going to get there!" said Marta hotly.

"And who's been teaching you all these politics? Bublīs, I suppose! He's afraid that monument might get up and walk over to the east. Those comrades of his over there 'ud be in a bad way if it did! Maybe it was Bublīs who threw it down? And maybe your father helped him? . . . But I haven't seen anything, I haven't said anything!"

Busè stopped short with a start as she saw Silbakiene's face.

"What's that you said?" cried Magdè. "One more word and out you go! Coming along here without being asked, and then starting a lot of nasty hints!"

"Oh no, you can't put me out. Who'd throw a sister out in the middle

of the night? Think what you're saying. Or do you want to get me taken to the police station?"

"It 'ud serve you right! But I won't dirty my hands with you."

"All right, don't let's quarrel. You haven't offered me any coffee; at least give me a glass of cold water. Show that much humanity!"

It was strange, but Pikciurniene's voice was softer.

Magdè went to the kitchen for water, but returned with an empty mug.

"We haven't even any water. I didn't know it was going to be turned off, and didn't lay any in. There's no light either, as you see."

"Eh dear, and I'm dying of thirst! Well, it can't be helped, I'll just have to stand it. Oh, this town, this town! To take and turn everything off—just like that! . . . Oh yes, I was wanting to tell you. . . Well, we got to the city, and there it was all dark! And we hardly had time to get out of the station when suddenly—merciful Heaven!—a lot of men in uniform surrounded us! At first I thought they were Lithuanian soldiers. Well, I said to myself, here's the end of everything. I just prayed to God to save my life! But then I heard them talking German. I took a better look and found they were police. So I went up to one of them and asked him in German what this all meant. He said: '*Streik*,' and ordered us all to follow him. And told us to come quietly and not make a fuss, and said that if we were with the police, nothing would happen to us. But we must be quiet and orderly, or else we'd find ourselves in jail. Merciful Heaven! My heart was in my boots! We went along with them, and all the time I was thinking to myself: now—where are they taking us? And then I looked round and found there weren't nearly as many of us as there had been, only just a few. I saw one slip into a gateway, and another into an alley. Well, I thought and thought, and then made one jump right into your street!"

Pikciurniene laughed ingratiatingly, but she laughed alone.

"Of course, I ought to have taken the tram to Smeltè, and not troubled you. But since I was so close. . . Maybe you'd let me lie down somewhere, Magdè dear? As Marcius hasn't come, I could use his bed."

But Pikciurniene was not destined to lie down that night. There was another knock, the neighbour went out again, called through the door: "Who's that?" and received the answer: "Police!"

"My God, they've come to arrest you! What have I got myself into! They'll think I'm the same sort as you! What's going to happen? What's going to happen to me?"

Sure enough, the police had come to search the place.

"Perhaps you'd be so kind as to let me sit in your room?" Pikciurniene asked the landlord, whom the police had brought in as a witness.

"Nobody is allowed to leave here."

"But it's nothing to do with me. I only came this evening. . . . And the way things are here in the city, I—I—"

"Your papers!"

"I've got everything here with me, here you are, everything! I'm Pikciurniene of Benagai. I've a big farm there. Don't think, please, that I've anything to do with people like these. . . ."

No, the police did not think so, but she was politely asked to remain as a witness, since she was there.

"With pleasure! Perhaps I can help you search?" Pikciurniene offered obligingly.

"No, just sit where you are."

"Very good. . . . I always knew it! That's why they moved here to the city, to make trouble. I know that sort!"

The police searched long and thoroughly. Not only Marta, but the two smaller children had to get up while they searched the beds.

Day had broken when the police drew up their report. Pikciurniene signed it.

3

All sorts of things can happen in life, as poor Pikciurniene had to learn. Though she had never dreamt of misfortunes like the ones that came now.

"Lord of mercy, save and protect me!"

But here Pikciurniene made a very important discovery. As long as everything goes well with you, God helps you too. But if you're really in bad trouble, then it seems as though even God can find no way out, and leaves His servant to the mercy of a cruel fate. Had she not been afraid, she would have raised her fist and shaken it at God. But after all, He had always been kind to her so far, she didn't want to quarrel with Him. She'd have to get out of her difficulties somehow or other by herself, nothing else to be done!

So there was Pikciurniene up to her neck in troubles in the city. Incidentally, she found another unpleasant phenomenon—a nasty, gnawing stomach-ache; it looked as though something was badly out of order. And all this made her ears ring and her eyes heavy so that she could not raise them to look anyone in the face.

It was a clear, fine day. Silbakiene had stopped crying, but the look on her face boded nothing good. She made the beds, swept the floor, tidied the room and actually—of all things!—went round with a duster. Town ways! They'd even got time to fuss with things like that! She utterly ignored Pikciurniene, as though she did not exist.

Marta took a pair of buckets and went to fetch water. The other two children ran out, saying they were not coming back until they had found Father.

And Pikciurniene? Pikciurniene sighed, groaned, coughed—to show how bad she was feeling—and quietly prepared to go. And Magdè Silbakiene, the bitch, didn't even try to stop her. She could at least have offered breakfast. But no! Not a word! Call that a sister!

"Magdè dear, I'd like a wash," said Busè humbly.

"Plenty of water in the Dangej, go and wash there," Silbakiene answered curtly. "You needn't wait for Marta, it's not you she's bringing water for."

Pikciurniene said nothing. Yes, she said nothing, because she could not look Magdè in the face. The strange ache which had begun in her stomach seemed to be spreading. Silently Busè tied her kerchief and crept out of the door without taking leave.

She would never go to the Silbakises again. Never, whatever happened! She would go straight home today. The strike must end soon, surely! Anyhow, if she could not get home today, she had friends in Smeltė, people she had known in the war.

When she got out into the street, her eyes became less heavy and the gnawing pain stopped. But Pikciurniene was hungry. This, of course, was

nothing terrible. She would go into a café and get something to eat. She set off in search of one.

Had they all gone mad together?

The first café she saw was closed, so was the second, and so was the third. . . . Even the blinds were down.

"When do the cafés open?" she asked a passer-by.

"They won't be opening today," was the answer.

"Why not?"

"Strike!"

Disappointed, Pikciurniene hurried to the assessor's office. But there too the door was shut. What was to be done now? Maybe the best thing really would be to go home? But she grudged the wasted fare. If she went home, she'd only have to come again—just riding to and fro. And the time lost? And the money? . . . She knocked again, but she might as well have knocked at a tomb. Silence. There was plenty of life in the street, however. People passing all the time, and what people! Not a single respectable man among them! All rough and shabby, uncouth, disgusting to look at. And they stared at her, at Pikciurniene, as though they'd like to tear her to bits. Yes, better go home.

Pikciurniene almost ran to the station for fear of missing the train.

Why was the booking office closed so early? What time was it? Heavens—the clock had stopped. Wait a bit—wasn't that a railwayman lounging over there? Better ask him when the train would go.

"Tell me, Friend. . . ."

The man stopped, examined her from head to foot, and spat.

"I don't seem to remember ever having friends of your sort."

Pikciurniene looked about her—God above, give strength to my legs! There was a crowd of people coming on the platform—no, not people, working men one and all, the same sort of ragged scamps she had seen before.

But some respectable gentlemen appeared too, thank Heaven, and from them Pikciurniene learned that the railwaymen were on strike and there would be no train today or tomorrow, or maybe even the day after.

Pikciurniene was nearly weeping. She hurried to the tram stop. She would take the first tram to Smeltè—to the suburb where her friends lived.

That tram's a long time coming, she thought. How much longer do I have to stand here?

Some passing man stopped, looked at Pikciurniene and asked what she was waiting for.

"The tram!"

Pikciurniene was perfectly dignified. But that impudent rascal—Heavens!—how he laughed!

"Maybe you've been here since yesterday evening, eh? Not tired of waiting yet? Better stretch your legs a bit, they must be swollen, after all this time. Or grown into the pavement. Do some walking. You'll have to wait a long time before you see any tram here. There's a strike on!"

Pikciurniene's feet actually were swollen. Would she really have to walk all the way to Smeltè? It was seven kilometres at least: And on an empty stomach, too! But there was nothing else for it.

So Pikciurniene set off for Smeltè. By the time she reached the place where her friends lived, her legs were buckling with weariness. After all, she was used to driving everywhere, even over to her fields. And here she

had to drag herself along on her own feet! And whose fault was it? Those workers! Those accursed workers! When would someone put them in their place? Easy to see that the French were gone! And those zemaitises? They couldn't even keep order in their own house. Eh dear, if only some warship would come from England or America, the way it was before!

She knocked. The door opened, and she looked into the face of a stranger.

"Are the Harfenstelers at home?"

"They don't live here any more."

"What?!"

"They've gone to Germany. Not very long ago. Sold the house and went to live with their children."

The door closed. Silence, like the grave.

Pikciurniene sat down on the step, ready to weep. She was hungry! And her feet were blistered! And no way to turn! Maybe she should go back to Silbakiene? All very well to hope for warships, but before they came you might be dead!

No, I'd sooner die here, in the street!

In the black curtain of despair, however, she did manage to find one "hole," as she put it afterwards—a "hole" where she was fed, for a good round sum, of course.

With renewed strength she went limping back to the city, and Heavens!—what she found there!

Pikciurniene never knew how she got into that human torrent sweeping into the centre, carrying along all in its path like chips on a flood. It bore her to the Market Square, to the Simanas Dacha Fountain.

What a mass of people! Could there really be so many workers in the city? Why, they could sweep right over those poor policemen if they liked! And the police evidently realized as much, for they slunk round corners. And who was that standing on the steps at the foot of the monument? No, it was a stranger, she had never seen him, but he was just the same as all the others . . . or maybe a little less ragged. Look at his face! And his eyes! And the way he was talking! Bold as brass!

Were there no warships in the world, after all?

When the occasion arose, Pikciurniene had plenty of courage. Nobody there could know that she was a landowner of Benagai. She looked about her and saw there were quite a few other people of her own kind, drawn there by curiosity. She quietly edged forward, closer to the speaker. After all, it would be interesting to hear what he had to say.

She did not understand everything. And she could not always hear very clearly because of the crowd.

"When they joined us to Lithuania, it was not because—" (here she lost some words) "but because. . . The Entente wanted to separate the Klaipeda district from Germany because in Germany there was a big revolutionary movement which hasn't died down even now." (Pity they don't all die, those rascals—they're the ones who've been making the trouble!—And I thought everything was quiet and orderly in Germany. A nice state of things! . . . But let's hear what else he's saying.) "The Klaipeda district was to be a springboard from which the Entente could attack the land of Soviets from the rear. Why didn't they give this district back to Lithuania when—" (again Pikciurniene lost some words).

"It was because there was Soviet power over two-thirds of Lithuania. And they wanted the Klaipeda district as a strongpoint for a war against. . ."

"That's right!" shouted someone beside Pikciurniene—so loudly that she was nearly deafened

"Shut up!" someone else said angrily. "Don't interrupt!"

Again the speaker's voice became plain and audible.

"It was only Soviet Russia that prevented the imperialists of the Entente from making the Klaipeda district their military base in eastern Europe. It was thanks to Soviet Russia that we were not handed over to the reactionaries in Poland, and that the French were withdrawn. Then the Entente decided. . ."

Why couldn't people keep quiet? Pikciurniene wanted to hear what the Entente had decided. Maybe they'd decided something good. If that man up there abused the Entente, then the Entente must be right. He said something more, something about the working people in Klaipeda district being on guard, then he went back to the Polish reactionaries again. . . . Well, she had as much use for them as she had for Lithuania. But if. . .

"The Lithuanian bourgeois authorities set up in the Klaipeda district promised. . ." (How can they promise anything when they haven't anything to give?) "But look at what's happening! The civil service is still run by the Kaiser's officials, the courts follow the Kaiser's laws, except that the penalties are harsher. The first thing the bourgeois government of Lithuania did was to proclaim martial law, and the death sentence for what they call 'breach of the peace.' Instead of. . ."

Pikciurniene could catch only fragments of phrases, for a forest of clenched fists rose menacingly and there were angry shouts: "Down with the bourgeoisie! Down with them!" As a matter of fact, Pikciurniene had already lost interest. All that stuff was for the workers, for the men who were on strike, God alone knew why. . . . But stop a minute, what was it they demanded?

"We demand the release of the workers that have been arrested!" (Aha, so they're being arrested!) "We demand an eight-hour day and higher wages. We demand a land reform; the estates must be divided up and given to the working peasants and farm labourers. . . ."

Stark, staring, raving mad! Pikciurniene seethed. They're not satisfied with stirring up the workers in the city, they've got to go sticking their noses into the villages too! What business is it of theirs? . . . But who are those? Thank Heaven, at last!

A weight seemed to roll off Pikciurniene.

A regiment of Uhlans came galloping along Market Street, straight at the crowd. Pikciurniene herself had to run to avoid being trampled or struck over the head with a whip. She got on to the pavement, turned to look, and saw that the police were making their way through to the workers clustered round the monument. The speaker had disappeared. A number of men were lying on the ground, stunned by the heavy whips. Pikciurniene was so glad she wanted to shout "Hurrah!" But then she reflected that this would be paying too much honour to those zemaitises. All the same, the Uhlans were splendid fellows. How they beat and lashed that scum!

Suddenly she saw Bublīs on the very top step of the monument. He raised his hand.



"Comrades!" His voice rang out loud and clear. "Comrades! Keep calm! Although they attack us with arms, our will is strong and unshakable. We shall not relinquish our demands. If they arrest one, a hundred more will rise! If they arrest a hundred, a thousand will take their places! Our demands are just. . . ."

Then the noise drowned out all but fragments.

"We shall not return to work until. . . Victory will be ours. . . ."

He's the devil himself, that Bubliss, Pikciurniene raged. Why don't they grab him? Why does the government allow all this agitation? Why do they let him pour oil on a fire that's bad enough as it is. . . . Ah! They've got him!

The police were reaching up for Bubliss. But even more hands reached up from the other side of the monument.

"Bubliss! Down here! Down here!"

The next instant Bubliss had disappeared in the crowd. It surrounded

him on all sides and swallowed him. Pikciurniene spat in disgust.

Again there was a stir and movement; hands were raised high in the air, hands clenched in fists, and voices rose, rose and swelled in a mighty song. Pikciurniene heard a woman's ringing voice quite close to her.

*Arise! ye starvelings from your slumbers;
Arise ye criminals of want.*

She turned. The woman standing beside her was not yet old but already bent, with yellowish-pale face and sunken eyes. Those eyes were fixed on her, on Pikciurniene, and the raised fist seemed to threaten her. She had seen that woman somewhere before. But where? . . . Heavens! Was it that one? Sitting there on the threshold saying: "Mistress, I'm not a beggar. . . ."

Pikciurniene screwed up her eyes, clapped her hands to her ears, turned and ran. She ran until she came to a quiet, deserted side-street. Then she stopped and turned to see if anybody was pursuing. No, there was nobody. She took off her shoes, tied the laces, slung them over her shoulder, and set off for home on foot. Forty kilometres is no joke. But at least it was safer.

After all, I can sleep in the woods if necessary, she thought. Then a terrible idea struck her. Who knows what may be happening at home? Suppose. . . ?

She hurried, she almost ran, but she could not escape a feeling of being followed by that woman with the yellow face, sunken eyes and raised fist.

*Arise! ye starvelings from your
slumbers;
Arise ye criminals of want.*

4

Silbakis nearly fell headlong when he was pushed into the cell.

"Here's another!" someone said.

The iron door clanged to behind him. There was a thud as though someone had pushed it to with a boot, then a key turned. And that was that.

"Damn!" growled Silbakis. He felt that now he could curse all he pleased.

"Well, Brother, what are you here for?" asked a voice from the darkness.

Silbakis tried to sort out all that had happened to him. The sunshine had been very bright, shining right in his face. So he saw nothing until he was right there, at that damned place. And then he saw it. Of course he was amazed, and of course he stopped and stared. Who wouldn't? Martial law, nobody allowed to stick their noses out after nine, patrols everywhere so that you were afraid even to look out of the window for fear of getting your head bashed in—and here, someone had taken and thrown down those two great slabs of monuments! Wilhelm I and that cursed Luise! Wilhelm was lying decently with his nose to the ground as behoves an old man who'll soon be underneath it. But that Luise! On her back with her legs in the air! You could die of laughing! And of course he couldn't keep his silly tongue quiet and addressed her with: "Now, who's put you down in such



an unseemly position, poor thing? And where's your *Drang nach Osten?*"

And there were those curs, those spies, as though they'd jumped out of the ground.

"What was that you said?"

"Me? I didn't say anything. No one to talk to."

"Why are you standing here?"

"And why shouldn't I? It's not forbidden, is it? Maybe I'm waiting for a girl?" Silbakis hoped to joke himself out of what he felt to be a nasty mess.

"By the overturned monument?"

"It wasn't overturned when we fixed the place."

"Oho! And who d'you think threw it over?"

"Who? Same sort of people as you and me. But they must have had a pretty powerful crane to do it."

A whistle shrilled. The thud of footsteps. Three or four policemen—and here he was behind bars. And what have I done?—he thought. Nothing at all!

"Why are you here? What for?"

"For staring."

"Staring?"

"Is there anywhere here to sit down? I can't see a thing, I'm still blinded from the sunshine. . . . And—well—I wasn't helped in very tenderly!"

"Here, here you are, sit down on the bed, Mate! They don't supply arm-chairs in this place."

Silbakis fumbled till he felt something—a wooden board with bedding, it seemed to be. Somebody was already sitting on it.

"Actually, sitting on beds is forbidden," said his neighbour. "But as there are a lot of us and they didn't think it necessary to issue chairs, we've given ourselves permission."

"Have you been here long?" Silbakis asked.

"All come at different times, Brother."

"But what are you all here for?" He broke off short. Maybe—Heaven forbid!—there were murderers or thieves among them. Better not ask questions. But one was already answering.

"The same thing as you!"

The next morning Silbakis was taken to be questioned. He returned, gritting his teeth.

"The bastards! The dirty swine! Of all the idiotic things to cook up!"

"Well, come on, out with it—what did they say?"

"Huh! Asked me whether I threw down the monument! Idiots! I'm not the dare-devil sort, but I opened my mouth and told them: 'I'm not in the habit of fighting stones! If I want to fight anything, it won't be them!'"

"Did they believe you?"

"Try and make them believe anything! I said to them: 'That monument to Luise or that Prussian or whatever she's called stood right under the windows of the police station! What were the police doing when it was thrown down? It wasn't done by mice gnawing under it. It wasn't done by ghosts. It was done by men. And they couldn't do it with their bare hands, either. They needed some sort of tackle. Maybe you had a finger

in it yourselves? So you could blame workers and put them in prison? Like me?' You should have seen how mad they got! I thought they were going to start beating me up!"

"Did they?"

"No, they didn't. But the way they yelled—I wonder it didn't lift the roof off! They said I'd rot in prison till I confessed. We'll see about that!"

Silbakis was not sure whether it was the fourth day or the fifth when they heard a strange noise outside the prison. It sounded as though the sea had flooded the city. Then there were separate voices. It was impossible to hear through the walls what they were saying. But inside there was shouting, and banging doors and running feet in the corridors. Then keys rattled, the iron grating fell, the door opened and a number of men whom Silbakis, of course, did not know, appeared in the opening. One of them was holding a list.

"Vilius Zardininkas!"

"Here!"

"Come out, please. . . . Walter Sangwald!"

"Here!"

"Please. . . . Marcius Silbakis!"

So Silbakis found himself outside the prison once more. Again the sunshine blinded him. And what a crowd! People embraced and kissed each other, wives wept to see their husbands again. . . . Just like women, thought Silbakis. But in his heart of hearts he envied those husbands. Nobody was there to meet him, or hug and kiss him. So he set off for home at a run, without turning. He could hear the crowd move off somewhere, and start up with some song. When he had to pass the Luise monument he shut his eyes so that he would not be tempted to stop and laugh again.

At home he found Magdè busy with the children. When she saw him she burst into tears.

"Come on now, come on, wife, nothing to sniffle about," he said, "I'm back again, safe and sound. Better let me get washed and have something to eat, if there's anything left."

While he was eating, the Bublises looked in.

"Well, Marcius, so you've had a taste of prison skilly, eh?" laughed Bublís.

"Yes, I've had some. And what for! Because of that Prussian I happened to pass by and stopped to take a look—why was she lying there on the ground, I thought. Idiots! Do they think a man who'd thrown it down would stand there waiting to be arrested?"

"Well, anyway, you've got to know them a bit better," and Bublís grinned.

"You know, Jurgis, when Klaipeda was given back to Lithuania, I thought everything was going to be different. But instead of that, they . . . well, how can I put it? Instead of understanding people, treating folks decently, they seem to do nothing but think up dirty tricks. Somebody pushes the monument down, and instead of being glad that there isn't even a memory left of that *Drang nach Osten*, they take folks and shove 'em into prison! Eh, scum always rises to the top, that's a true saying. There'll be a lot more floating up yet that we've never even dreamed of, eh?"

Bublís looked at him and smiled.

Old age began to knock at Busè Pikciurniene's door with no uncertain hand. So far it had not found the latch, but it might at any moment. And then? Old age would lay her on her bed, fasten her down there, and then. . . No, it was too soon to think about death yet; but handing over the management of the farm to her son—of that she could think seriously, especially as he himself was already eager to be on his own feet. That was only natural. The years were passing, Jokubelis¹ had been out of knickers a long time now. Of course—it was far from pleasant to think of soon having to hand over the reins to another. It seemed only yesterday that Busè Pikciurniene had got rich, and now—leave it up—and go away! Go? . . . Oh no! No question of that yet! But time did not stand still. Take Pikciurna, for instance. . . creaking and groaning all the time. Though he always had groaned, for that matter—an ache here and a pain there. Only she, Busè, had never had time to groan, and had never done so. But now she began to catch herself: "Oh my back! Oh, my hands! Something wrong inside me. If only it's not. . . Heaven forbid! What is it the Holy Script says?—'Put your house in order, for tomorrow you may. . . ' No, no! But just to be sure. . ."

If only Jurgis had not been killed in the war! She would have handed over to him gladly, without the slightest hesitation. He had always been a dutiful son. But Jokubelis! The contrariness of the boy! Just think of it—to go and fall in love with Ilze Malonike!

It all happened this way.

Jokubas junior had not felt any very great interest in the Malone family, but he knew his mother was always at daggers drawn with them, and it was enough to say the word "malone"² without even meaning the neighbours for her to fly into a rage.

This young man decided to amuse himself by teasing his mother. For a beginning he started greeting the Malones when he saw them. At first they did not reply—probably thought: like mother, like son, and so on. But young Jokubas continued until at last their hearts softened and they answered. Then Jokubas began going into the Malone yard now and then. When the gate was locked, he would lean over it and if nobody appeared, pass the time talking to the dog—which wagged a condescending tail and yawned to show he found it all very boring.

Busè saw what her son was up to, and her choler rose.

"What bee's got into your bonnet now, dunderhead? Want to keep company with those? Those paupers? Those beggars?! Don't you dare! Or I'll give you what for!"

But young Jokubas did not care what his mother would do. He knew her through and through, all he wanted was to annoy her. Nothing else. Nothing else, of course. . . Oh how dull; how deadly dull life was! Especially for Jokubas. He did not work—there were farm hands for that. Study? But he'd learned everything already—reading, writing, arithmetic—he had even learned the whole multiplication table off by heart at school. What more did he need?

Had there been a theatre or cinema near by he would have gone every evening, although he knew there wasn't always a good show. By "a good

¹ Jokubelis is a diminutive of Jokubas, used for children.

² Malone—kindness, compassion.

show" he meant adventures, crime, wild animals and that sort of thing. If worst came to worst, he could sit through a love story too; the only pity was that he could not make practical use of what he learned from the cinema.

His mother had once thought of buying a house in the city, but then for some reason she had got frightened and dropped the idea. Now that would have been just the thing! He could have gone there and had a good time, all the pleasure he wanted! But as it was, the only amusement for young Jokubas was the village inn. He was no drunkard, you could not say that of him. But a man has to have a good spree now and then! A couple of times he even got into a fight—how else can you show that you're right and the other fellow's wrong?

And now, to annoy his mother, he began talking to the Malones.

When Pikciurniene decided it was time for him to get married and advised him to court Stimbrike of Ziaukeliai, or even better Benagyke of Benagiai, he felt the time had come to give his dear mother a real shock.

Ilze Malonike's cheeks flushed red as the apples he tossed to her over the fence, as a first advance.

At first he could not have said that Malonike attracted him more than the other girls; in fact, they all looked pretty much alike to him. But what was a man to do when his mother kept dinning into his ears morning, noon and night that he ought to get married, get married, get married!

Then he began to notice that Malonike was not nearly as silly as most of the girls. Benagyke couldn't hold a candle to her. The only snag was—Malonike had no money. But after all, did that matter so very much? He was the only heir, the whole farm was his! True, Ilze had one more drawback—her family was nothing to boast about. She had an uncle sweeping streets in the city, and another relative who had only one arm and limped, and was so poor she actually went about begging—unless she had died. But even that did not scare young Jokubas. On the contrary, he was tickled by the thought of how all this would infuriate his dear mother.

"Mummie, Jokubas is making eyes at me," Ilze told her mother, half proud, half annoyed.

"Now then, now then, Daughter!" Her mother shook a finger at her.

"Are you sure you haven't been making eyes at him yourself?"

It sounded as though she were pleased but did not want to show it.

"But what if he wants me to marry him?"

"Anything bad about that, dearie?"

"I'd like to have a handsome husband! Jokubas is so lumpish!"

"You can find plenty of handsome ones, but they won't be so rich. Just think what a lady you'd be!" The mother could contain herself no longer. "You could bathe in milk, you'd never have to put your hands in cold water, just walk about carrying a bunch of keys! Heavens, Heavens above! But no—things like that don't happen to us! It's just foolishness!"

Maloniene called up all her cunning to her aid. If Jokubas really did want to marry Ilze—it was difficult to believe it, but suppose he did—just think what Pikciurniene would say! So Maloniene decided to act. One day when she saw Jokubas lounging about his yard, hands in his pockets, she called him.

He literally ran to the fence. This was the first time any of the Malone family had spoken to him first.

"Did you call me?"

"Uhuh! Why don't you ever drop in and see us? Ilze often says. . ."

Young Pikciurna actually jumped.

"What? But I didn't know. . . . I thought. . ."

"Oh, rubbish! Look in some evening."

"But—can't I come now?"

(What a gawk!)

"No, no! In the evening!"

After a little time had passed Malonienė started buzzing like a mosquito. If he intended to marry—and she'd always thought he was serious—then it was about time he did it! Because Ilze, poor child. . . Oh dear, what a misfortune! What a scandal! What a terrible thing! And there the Meikis had sent matchmakers and Ilze had turned them away. And now? Was he going to cast her off to be a laughing-stock? Did he really want everyone to call him a seducer? Had he no sense of honour? Or did he want to spend the whole of his life tied to his mother's apron strings until she made him like . . . like. . . After all, everyone knew Pikciurnienė! Malonienė had trusted him blindly, as though he were her own son! She had allowed him to come and see Ilze, even to go into her room! There was nothing wrong about that in itself, of course, but. . .

"Look how Ilze's crying, poor child!"

Jokubas at once showed that his intentions were perfectly honourable, and he was no worse than young Meikis.

"Why are you always nagging me about Benagyke?" he growled at his mother. "I don't want that fat pudding!"

"Jokubelis! Are you an absolute fool, or what? Think what you're saying! Come to your senses!" Pikciurnienė implored. "Remember—the Benagys of Benagai and us—we're the richest farmers in the village, even the whole district. Why, Benagys comes from the nobility! His family were the first to settle here. The village is named after them! The Benagys have been here for centuries, just as the Pikciurnas will be. Even Perkunike of Milkarpiai married into their family. And Milkarpiai's a really big estate. Think of the honour it would be to be related to a family like that! Why, Benagys was witness for me once, and when I was thanking him he said—even then he said: 'I've got growing daughters. Maybe we'll be related some day.' Jokubas, just think how splendid it would be! Jokubas, what if I send—well, say Snekutiene? She used to be quite a good matchmaker. If I had a daughter-in-law from such a fine, respected, really suitable family, then I could die in peace."

"But I don't want—" her son began.

"No, of course, it's early for me to talk of dying yet! I shan't die for a long time! I was only just saying—"

"And what I say is—I don't want that Benagyke! I've chosen a girl for myself."

"Who?"

"I've got one, I tell you. . . . The betrothal's next week."

"But who is it?" Pikciurnienė was literally gaping.

"Ilze."

"Ilze Ma—Ma—Ma—"

Pikciurnienė could not even pronounce the word, it was so hateful, so horrible. . . .

Then hell broke loose in the house, with quarrels and abuse day and night.

"I shan't let you have the farm! I'll do the same as my father did! I'd sooner have strangers living here!"

"Very well," her son answered. "Then I'll go away with Malonike. Only remember, my dear Mother. . ."

Oh, the things he said to his mother! He threatened to expose all her dirty dealings.

To say such things to his mother!

And he added that she, Pikciurniene, had been dragging neighbours to court all her life, now he'd take her to court in her turn, and put her in the dock.

"You're not going to spoil my life as you've spoiled others," he said. "I'm a man! And I know what I'm doing! And if I've given my word, I keep it!"

Has that witch given him a potion and turned his wits?—thought Pikciurniene. To have an estate and marry a pauper? That never was and never will be!

One night he came home thoroughly drunk. Probably to give himself courage. He went into his mother's room, nudged her side to waken her, and demanded: "Well, my dear Mother, when are you going to give your consent to my marrying Ilze Malonike?"

"Are you starting all that again? Merciful Father! No peace even at night! Gone clean crazy! . . . What d'you want, you villain?"

"I'm asking you—do you give your consent? Speak up!"

"I'm saying nothing, and I shan't."

"Tomorrow's our betrothal. . . . What? What was that you said? . . . Nothing? All right, then!"

"I've said enough already! You know my mind. And I don't change it! I've never yet changed my mind and I'm not going to start now. Mark that! And now—not another word!"

"All right, my dearest Mother!" (Yes, he called her "dearest Mother," but the irony of it!) "If you don't let Ilze come here, I shan't live here either! You hear that?"

"I've said a long time ago it's time for you to get out of this house and beg your bread. Sling a sack on your back, take your Malonike by the hand and go your ways. You'll soon see how far she'll go with you if you're a beggar! You'll see how much she loves you then!"

"But you won't live here either," her son announced, ignoring her closing words. "I'll burn the roof over your head! D'you get that? Or not? Speak up! It's my last word. . . . Nothing to say? . . . Still nothing? Where are my matches? I've got lamp-oil ready and there's plenty of straw. . . ."

Pikciurniene was too much frightened to stir or even to speak.

Staggering, her son made for the door.

Somehow or other Pikciurniene collected her wits, jumped out of bed and ran after him barefoot. And he—oh merciful Heaven!—he stood there and stood there in the yard, and then . . . went through the wicket gate leading to the Malones!

"What's going to happen, dear Lord God, what's going to happen? Lord, counsel him! And counsel me too, what I'm to do!"

She ran to old Pikciurna who was sound asleep and shook him awake. "Sleeping like a log! And that accursed Jokubas nearly burning the house down! And d'you know why? Because of Malonike! My God, because of Malonike!"

6

The Bergeshoch carriage was the first to roll into the yard. After it came all the other conveyances.

Ilze Malonike absolutely refused to have the cart with the bridesmaids and best man lead the way. She didn't care a snap for custom. She would have things as she wanted—and she did.

When Ilze stepped down from the carriage, her patent-leather shoes twinkled even more triumphantly than its panels. As though forgetful of everything, the bride stood for a moment on the step looking over the yard. Her lips tightened, her eyes narrowed, and something new came into her face. She glanced towards the farm buildings and caught the voices of the labourers coming from them. Then she looked at the huge haymow and the poultry-house.

Mine! All mine! She felt something tickling her throat.

The guests were gathered near the door, awaiting the arrival of the bridal couple. Among them were some of the bride's relations who were—alas!—anything but a credit to Ilze.

I'll just have to show them I've never had anything to do with them before and I'm not starting now, she thought. Otherwise they'll be hanging round all the time. To have a rich relation like me—it's an honour for them!

The guests began moving towards the house in couples. But again Ilze Malonike, now Pikciurniene, treated customs with contempt. She wanted to enter first, none accompanying her. Let them whisper! Let them say what they want—she was going to do things the way *she* wanted!

"Well, come along, Jokubas!"

On the threshold sat a beggar woman known as Ilzele. She was related to Malone, although very distantly. Ilze's mother had explained the exact degree of relationship a number of times, but Ilze had not been sufficiently interested to remember it. Ilzele came in when she happened to be passing, spent the night behind the stove and left before Ilze was awake. She had never been to the Pikciurna farm. But now here she was, large as life! And not just for alms, no, she was waiting for the bride to come home from church! When Ilze and Jokubas drove up, the beggar-woman fell on her knees right by the door and started her usual song about "The Glorious Land Beyond the Jordan."

Ilze Pikciurniene stopped, and everyone expected to hear her graciously accept the old woman's congratulations. But Ilze had different ideas.

I'll have to put a stop to this sort of thing, she thought. I can't have beggars wherever I look. It'll make it difficult to take our proper place—with the Benagyses and Meikises. . . .

"So you've come, have you?" was her acknowledgement of Ilzele's congratulations. "Why did you have to pick today? My mother-in-law won't like you hanging round!"

Ilze stood for a moment, letting her eyes pass over the grey-headed old woman with haughty contempt.

"I just wanted to take a look at you," the beggar-woman answered loudly and almost arrogantly. "I thought you might be a bit better than Busè Pikciurniene. You come of poor folks yourself, you ought to feel for a poor woman like me. You can't have forgotten so soon what it's like to go hungry!"

But Ilze Pikciurniene had already moved away with her guests. Her mother, who had been in the hall and had heard everything, went out to the old woman.

"You oughtn't to have said that, Ilzele! After all, it's her wedding day, remember. . . . Go along now, you've had a good meal, and look how much I've put in your bag, it'll last you a long time. Go along! Can't you see how old Pikciurniene's glaring? She didn't say anything today—after all, it's the wedding, but if it were any other day. . . ."

"Old Pikciurniene's ill looks don't frighten me, I can see her day's over! Thank you for the food. I'm going. Oh, just one thing—my stick's split, can't you get me another? With all the men about the place here. . . ."

"Ilzele, don't be foolish. Who's going to start looking for a stick just now? Go to our place, maybe Jonis has one."

"Nay, Maloniene," Ilzele answered. "Let Malone keep his stick. He'll need it yet to correct his daughter. He hasn't used it enough!"

Ilzele rose and shook out her skirt—with the same gesture as Ilze Pikciurniene. But this time it looked as though Ilzele were shaking the Pikciurna dust off her rags. Outside the gate she called back some more biting words about Ilze, laughed, and disappeared.

For this day—of course, only for this one day—Busè Pikciurniene had handed over the reins of domestic management to Maloniene. In the first place Busè really was tired with all the recent worry and work. However little she liked this marriage, it must be celebrated in due style. The only son! And secondly, it would have been too great an honour for that bitch Malonike to have Busè Pikciurniene herself waiting on her. Busè had even seriously considered leaving the house altogether that day. Let them celebrate without her. But she thought better of it. She would sit in the place of honour, as befitted her. And she would let everybody see how kind she was, condescending to accept Malonike. Not only today, but always, she would look down superciliously on Ilze. And Ilze must raise her eyes to Busè with the humblest respect—if she ventured to raise them at all.

Nobody, nobody could know the struggle all this had cost Pikciurniene, nobody had seen how she wept or heard her lamentations. She had bitten holes on her pillow, soaked it with her tears. And all because of that Maloniene. All because of her. If it hadn't been for that old vixen, it would never have entered Jokubas' head.

Now she wept no more, she lamented no more, but the struggle was not over, oh no! We'll see who comes out on top! I've my portion for life! And let that Ilze just try to keep anything back, even so much as a single rag! . . . Busè Pikciurniene would know how to get it from her! She knew all the ins and outs of things, she needed nobody's advice.

And the Malone land? That had been Ilze's dowry—she was the only heir. Now it all belonged to the Pikciurnas. At last that land had come into Pikciurniene's possession! And Busè intended to waste no time. There was a little space free by the poultry-house where a hut could be built—one room and a kitchen. Quite enough for them! Maloniene could have a

window on the side where her house and yard used to be, if she liked. She could amuse herself looking out at the hens and ducks and on the empty field. . . .

But nobody could ever put Pikciurniene out of her big, light rooms! The locks on the doors, the handles on the windows were all of bronze, shining like gold. The kitchen had tiled walls and floor, and copper rods and hooks. Her mirrors, her china, her silver! Busè Pikciurniene had lost nothing, nothing! Her savings bank book. She could add more to it yet! But no, maybe better not. Better be careful, better start another account, in the big bank. Yes, in the Bank of Emission. . . .

There's something in it when people say I ought to have set Jokubelis up on a farm of his own. Well, he's got what he wanted. Let him get down to work with that wife of his! Let him work the way I've worked! He needn't think he's going to get everything handed to him on a silver platter while he lies in his bed. Oh no! I shan't ask for all the money at once. In instalments. . . . Things haven't worked out quite as I wanted, of course, but I've got my way in one thing at least. That Malone house is going to disappear. I wonder what Maloniene'll look like when she has to crawl into her new home by the poultry-house! And if they don't want to work on my estate, then they'll just have to starve! I'll teach them to catch a land-owner for their slut of a daughter!

Pikciurniene took her husband's hand and entered the big room. The guests were already seated at table. And it appeared that there was no room left beside the bride. Pikciurniene stopped. For a moment she thought of making a scene, but decided against it. She quickly picked up two free chairs from the other end of the table and placed them beside her son.

"Move up a little," she said politely to the guests, and obviously embarrassed, they made room. It really was an awkward moment. No place had been left at table for the parents. And for Pikciurniene of all people!

But it all passed off smoothly. Pikciurniene ate and drank, talking affably to the guests.

The Malones were not at the table. But what did they matter? They weren't important, they could find themselves a place anywhere!

Maloniene was busy arranging something out in the corridor for the less important guests. And Malone stood at the door smoking his pipe and grinning sourly, breaking out into a shrill falsetto laugh every now and then.

"Ilze said. . ."

Maloniene did not want to betray her daughter, but neither did she want to take the blame herself.

"Ilze said if there wasn't enough space—and there really isn't any in the big room. . . . And anyway," Maloniene interrupted herself, half in jest, half seriously, "let the fat jowls be all together, and we'll go into the small room by the kitchen. Marè and I've laid the table there. And I managed to get some of the cake from Ilze. . . . but what am I saying? I don't have to manage it, of course, we're guests just like anyone else."

Maloniene's words poured out—too many of them, and in increasing confusion.

"Well, come along."

"Yes, dearie, it makes no difference, does it?" Snekutiene consoled her ingratiatingly. "There are plenty of places for us in the small room."

So long as we don't lose our place in Heaven! . . . Well, Mr. Kibelka, are you coming?"

Ilze Pikciurniene's gay voice rang out from the main room.

"You can surely take just a little wine, Your Reverence! After all, you give us wine yourself—even in church!"

"Let's go in," said Maloniene more loudly, trying to drown her daughter's voice.

Snekutis and Snekutiene went into the room by the kitchen where Maloniene's relations were sitting, very uncomfortably crowded. They looked as though they were waiting for somebody. Marè Snekutike was busy at the table. Her mother whispered in her ear and nodded significantly towards the corridor where Kibelka was still standing. Marè did not seem to understand, she asked again and again: "What? . . . What?" but did not go out.

"Wait a minute, Maloniene, who's keeping us out here?" asked Kibelka.

"There's no more room in there, Krizas, there really isn't!"

"Well, all right then, if there's no room I'm going."

"But Krizas—! You mustn't take offence like that!" the bride's mother implored. "Young people don't think what they're doing! They'll realize it one of these days and then they'll be ashamed, they'll be coming and asking your pardon, you'll see."

"No, nobody'll come to ask my pardon, and I certainly shan't be waiting for it. But—"

"What's all this? It's not the market place!" Ilze's sharp voice broke in. She was standing in the doorway and had evidently heard everything. Her eyes were cold, the eyes of a stranger. "Why are you making all this fuss, Kibelka? Want people to get down on their knees and beg you to sit down?"

"I don't need anyone to beg me, but I'm not going to be treated like a beggar either. You must excuse me, my dear Ilze—I forgot for the moment that I hadn't come to relations, but to the Pikciurnas. A house with a reputation! And I rather think you're going to increase that reputation! Well, good-bye, Mrs. Pikciurniene! I hope you'll be happy!"

"But Mr. Kibelka!" Snekutiene broke in. "Look, your relations and Malone's relations are all here. And they're all very respectable people!"

"I'm not saying anything about them."

"But Krizas," Maloniene pleaded, almost crying, "I've got so few relations of my own, don't hurt me like this! My daughter's just a silly girl. If I'd known before. . ."

She had no chance to finish; the sharp voice of her daughter cut her short.

"My dear Mother, I'd advise you to be a bit more careful how you talk about people who. . . If anyone wants to go, they can! And welcome! I'm not keeping you. You surely don't think, Kibelka, that I'm going to give you a place beside the pastor?"

Kibelka was already in the yard when young Pikciurna appeared.

"Why don't you come in?" he asked, suspecting nothing. "Why, Mother-in-Law, why are you crying? Father-in-Law, please take our guests in." He opened the door wide.

"Shut that door!" snapped Ilze. "If I say there's no more room, then there isn't! What are you thinking of? I've had a table laid for them in the small room, let them go there! It's the same food, everything just the

same. But Kibelka wants to sit with the pastor and the Meikises and the Benagyses! Thinks a bit too much of himself!"

"But why—? I don't understand."

"If you don't understand, then don't interfere."

"Eh, Krizas, Krizas," said Malone. "You can go, all of you can go, you've all got a place to go to. But me? Come to my house, before they take that away from me. . . . Very soon. . . ."

Malone's lips trembled.

"It's a nice daughter you've brought up!" Kibelka shook his head.

"She saw too much of Busè Pikciurniene, Friend, that's who she learned it from! She's climbed on her wagon and she's singing her tune. . . . Come along with me, while I've still got a corner I can call my own."

"Whether you like it or not—I'm sorry for you."

"D'you think I'm not sorry for myself? Aye. . . . Brought up a daughter, and because of her I'm left without stick or stone. My house won't be standing much longer. Pikciurniene's got the better of me at last. I'm in the web."

7

"Now what can you make of those women!" Jonis Malone spat. He was still waiting for the stork to visit Ilze Pikciurniene.

"Look here, Mother," he said to his wife. "Why's it Ilze's . . . so long?"

"What do you want of Ilze?"

Malonienė knew well enough what he wanted. For she had deceived him. She had fooled him. Fooled him completely. He had fought bitterly against his family having anything to do with the Pikciurnas. He had even thought of selling the farm and turning his daughter out.

"Let her go and work, the hussy, and not mess around with the Pikciurnas. Thinks she's going to be a fine lady, does she?"

Then later, his weeping wife told him that Ilze and Jokubas had "sinned," and now there was no way out unless Ilze drowned herself, because in a few months. . . . So Malone surrendered. Now Ilze Malonienė had become Pikciurnienė, she was young Pikciurnienė, she was a rich landowner. That was the end of it.

But it was not quite the end. There was still Busè Pikciurnienė. Yes, Busè was still there, very much so. She had the "estate" tightly clutched in her own hands. She still occupied the whole of the big house, relegating the young couple to Jokubelis' room in the attic. Busè was still mistress in every sense of the word. Ilze could not even find anything to do in the kitchen. The store-room key, and all the others too, hung at Busè's belt. Ilze could weed the garden if she liked, or water the calves, or work in the laundry.

But Ilze did not like! She hadn't married into an estate to work like a servant! Busè might think she'd caught a simpleton. Well, she'd made a mistake!

Ilze did not venture to say anything to the old woman, however. Her time had not yet come. According to the agreement, the farm would pass to Jokubas junior only in the winter. First there would be the reaping and threshing. Then Busè would measure out with her own hands the portion

which was hers, take it to town with her own horses and sell it. Only then, round about Christmas or New Year, would she move over into her part of the house, which she had the right to use as long as she lived.

But much could happen before that.

One day Busè sent for all the labourers and led them to the poultry-house. A pile of left-over building material lay behind it—stones, bricks, beams and some planks that were still quite good. All this had to be sorted and stacked, and a place cleared for the new house. Neither her son nor her daughter-in-law, of course, would see to this job. All right, they could let it alone. So much the better, in fact—the work would go faster under her.

Yes, Busè wanted it to go fast, she was avidly eager to see the look on Maloniene's face when she had to leave her home and move in here, by the poultry-house. . . . We'll see how pleased you are then!

The building had to be done with all possible speed. There is always a short lull in farm work between sowing and haymaking—Busè saw that full use was made of it to finish the "new house."

Old Pikciurna was let into the secret, on condition that he kept a close mouth. And his mouth did remain closed. He was an old man, he wanted peace. He relinquished to his son even the remnants of authority which he still had the right to retain.

"It's your turn to work now, Son! I've done my part. My arms ache something awful—must be the rheumatism. And I can't be out when the sun's too strong, it makes my head swim. And when I have to argue with the labourers, my heart goes all queer! And my legs are stiff, I can hardly walk. God knows whether I'll hold out till the autumn. . . ."

While the son "worked"—of course, under his mother's supervision—the father smoked his pipe in the sunshine and dozed.

"Counting the sparrows," hissed Busè angrily.

Ilze spent her time strolling carefree about the garden or visiting her old home, and the hut beside the poultry-house rose rapidly. Ilze was not particularly interested in it. Let them build what they liked. It was she who would be the mistress of it all, just the same.

Jokubas, however, asked his mother in some surprise: "What's that going to be?"

She smiled mysteriously.

"Can't you guess?"

"We've got all we need. You're building up the whole yard. Although I suppose it's not the yard really, it's outside the gate."

"And that's the way it ought to be, Jokubelis. You wait, you'll be glad yourself."

"But why waste all that money? Or is it to be for more labourers?"

"If it's not needed for anything else, it'll do for that."

The carpenters finished their work just as it was time to start haymaking. The hut had two windows on the Malone side, one for the living room, one for the kitchen. Busè had even allowed a small porch to be made, so that it would not look too bare. Then an old, sagging door was hung, the small windows put in, and the Malones' new dwelling was ready.

That evening Pikciurniene sent for her son and his wife. She was reclining on the sofa, drinking coffee and eating cakes. She had become less stingy recently and often bought dainties for herself. When the young



couple entered she invited them to sit down and offered them coffee and cakes in an affectionate manner very unusual for her.

"Well, children," she said, a smile fixed on her face, "it seems that my labours are completed. Time flies. A few months more and it will be autumn. And at Christmas, as you know. . . Well, what I wanted to say was. . ."

The smile disappeared.

"I would like to see you both doing a bit more work. Jokubas does work, that's true—as much as is fitting for the future master. But you, Ilze. . . When I went to my husband's house I never thought of resting. I set to work at once. I never rested day or night. Dozed a bit with my head on a pile of hay, and back to work again. Everything you see here—I have garnered it all. But what do you do? Sleep till midday and then stroll about with your hands hanging idle! Well? Haven't you anything to say?"

"But you don't give me any work."

"Give you work? A right-minded woman, the future mistress, doesn't wait for somebody to give her work, she finds it herself. Nobody ever gave me work! Open your eyes and look for it. The garden's all weeds, the potatoes in the cellar are sprouting. D'you expect me to go down and sort them? Is that my job? Why didn't you go haymaking if you couldn't find anything to do? A young woman like you—haymaking ought to be a pleasure! But what do you do? Saunter from one house to the other. D'you think you'll be able to keep on that way when I'm gone? Is it your mother putting you up to this way of acting? Shall I have to take you both in hand? D'you think you're going to gain anything by deliberately crossing me? Remember the agreement? If you don't, you'd better read it again. Jokubas has it in his cupboard. I can. . . . You know what I can do. I consented to let you marry my son, but I thought you'd be properly grateful, and show it. Have I been mistaken?"

"I'm not a servant, I'm the wife of my husband."

"Oh, so that's your tune, is it? You'd better not start getting above

yourself. You might very well have found yourself the wife of a labourer or maybe a beggar. . . ."

"Now Mother," interrupted Jokubas, "are you starting all that over again?"

"And you keep quiet too, Jokubelis! I'm not afraid of you. For the present you're in my hands. If you do as I say, you won't regret it. I'm telling you for your good. You too, Ilze. And there's one more thing I've got to say to you. You've come into our family though you didn't deserve it. Well, all right, then. But now you have to obey me! Understand that? Obey! Well! . . . I've built a hut for your parents. . . ."

Pikciurniene held her breath, waiting to see the effect. But so far as Ilze was concerned, there seemed to be none. She sat quite still, her head lowered, twisting a corner of the table-cloth. She never flickered an eyelid. Jokubas, however, gaped in surprise.

"Surely you guessed why I was building that house, Jokubas?"

"No, I never thought of it. Nobody'd ever spoken of such a thing."

"You ought to know by this time, I don't do much talking—I act!"

"I thought we were only going to take their land, but the house. . ."

"But I understood it all," said Ilze quietly.

"Why didn't you tell me?" asked Jokubas.

"I thought you'd planned it together."

"Well, now your parents will live in a new house," Pikciurniene continued. "They've never lived in a house like that in their lives before."

"In one like that—no!" Ilze answered very significantly. But nothing could be read on her face, it was cold and composed. "I'm quite pleased," she added.

"What are you pleased about? That I've built a house for your parents?"

"But Mother, why was it needed? We've got so much room in our house here!" the son interrupted again.

"What? What was that you said? In *my* house?"

"Well then—there's the Pluta house. . . ."

"Jokubas, I'd never agree to my parents living in the Pluta house," Ilze cut him short.

"My dear Ilze, you're not being asked. Your parents will live where I say. And there'll be no argument or discussion about it, either! Tomorrow morning early you can go and help them move into the new house. It's all ready, so I shall have nothing more to do with it all. Except to send the men over to pull down that rotting old hut of theirs! It's time to put things in order, high time."

"Very well," Ilze answered.

"And tell your parents, if they don't want to live where I say, they'd better get off my land. And it's not only the land belongs to me—you know that yourself—it's all the property on it, animate and inanimate. They'll take nothing away with them, not a rag. You can go now. And see you're up in good time tomorrow. Good night."

Busè Pikciurniene had no particular desire to have the Malones under her nose all the time. But she could not let them out of her sight either. They'd wanted to marry into an estate, had they? Well, they'd got what they asked for!

Ilze was an obedient daughter-in-law. Early in the morning she hurried over to her father and told him that today his house was to be pulled down. Everything had to be finished by the autumn—the house and buildings removed, the clay cleared away, the beams stacked and trees dug up. Then there would have to be a new fence, and the pond must be cleaned out, widened and deepened; the ducks and geese were getting big, they needed water.

"And look, Father, what a nice little cottage we've built you!"

"You? You've built it, Ilze? You do this to your own father? . . . Traitor! Judas!"

Ilze made no reply. She took her weeping mother to look at the new cottage.

Yes, Malonienė was weeping. It was very hard for her to lose her home. But that was not the worst. She knew that she was falling into the clutches of Busė Pikciurnienė.

"Perhaps, Ilze dear, you could put it off for a little while? Maybe. . ."

"No, Mother, I don't want it put off. Go and roll up the bedding and get everything ready. I'll bring the men in a little while to carry your things over."

Malonienė went back into her house and stopped, frightened. Her husband was pacing up and down the little room like a wild animal—no, more like a thrashed dog locked in the stable—dashing first to one window, then the other, peering out, watching apprehensively for something or somebody. He pushed his wife into the room, made her sit down, told her not to move, bolted the door and resumed his uneasy tramp from window to window.

"Not a thing do they touch!" he declared. "Over my dead body that Pikciurnienė comes in here! She's not going to pull my house down! She's not going to touch it! As long as I'm alive I'm going to have a corner of my own. I won't set foot on her stinking estate. Mark my words, Mother—not a foot do I set on it!"

"But Father, listen a moment," Malonienė tried to soothe him. "Don't get so excited! You don't know, maybe it really will be better for us? Quieten down a bit, think it over. . . ."

"I'm not thinking anything over! Let Pikciurnienė push me into some corner of hers? That bitch who's been trying to ruin us as long as she's been here?"

"But Father, it's our Ilze who's the mistress there now. If you'd only come and just take a look at that cottage. We'll be living quite separately."

"Ilze's not the mistress there, it's Busė you'll be dependent on for your bread. And it'll be the bread of charity. You'll stand there waiting for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table—and having to cringe for them, too, and say thank you. . . if they do fall. That's what you brought on yourself, Mother, luring in this waster! How many months is it now? Where's that child that was going to be born any minute? Why did you lie to me? Why did you have to push your head into Pikciurnienė's noose? You wanted to spite her, but why didn't you stop to think what she might have up her sleeve for you?"

There was nothing left for Malonienė but to weep. And she wept most bitterly. For it was all true, every word. But it couldn't be helped now.

What was done couldn't be undone. Good-bye, little home where she had known much trouble, but also much happiness! Malone had loved her, she had loved Malone, she loved him now. She could not conceive of life without him. Together they had toiled over their poor fields and put the strength of their bodies into them, together they had carried that load of poverty, and because they were together it had not seemed so heavy. Yes, they had been happy. What they sowed, they had reaped. Sometimes less, sometimes more. But the family had always been warm with love and thoughts that were shared. And their daughter—how proud they had been of her! Pretty as a picture! Sometimes she was naughty, of course—what child isn't? And how they had laughed when she declared that she would marry very early, and not just anybody, but a rich man with an estate! And then she would never have to feed the pigs, and she would eat cakes every day and always wear fine shoes. . . . Happy, childish dreams, they had thought with a smile. Let her have them, life'll teach her soon enough. And then when young Pikciurna began courting Ilze—well, after all, Malonienne was a mother, and what mother doesn't want her child to be rich and happy! Because of that she had quarrelled with her husband. It had been their first quarrel. And for the first time in her life she had lied to him.

"They're coming, those devils!"

"But Jonis, those are the labourers! Where are you going? Wait. . . ."

But Jonis was already out in the yard, running towards the labourers, shaking his fists. Malonienne ran out too, and hurried as fast as she could to the Pikciurnas, to Ilze.

"Ilze, dear Ilze, Daughter, why are you in such a hurry to pull down the house?" the mother sobbed. "Go and stop them, tell them to stop! Wait a little, only a little! Have pity! Your father's ill. . . . Let the house stand as long as he's alive. You know how hard it is for him. All morning I've thought he was going crazy, he couldn't keep still, he kept tramping up and down, up and down. . . . I'm afraid he might do himself a mischief. Just think, try to understand him—he was born here, lived here all his life. And you were born here too. Aren't you sorry yourself to do it? When Father dies, do as you like, I'll agree to anything if I'm still alive. . . . I mean, I know I shall be quite comfortable with you. It's only. . ."

Ilze would have cut out her tongue rather than admit that it was all being done on Busè's orders. No, she had to show her parents that she was the mistress, and all orders came from her.

"Why, Mother, are you trying to make me want Father to die?" she asked angrily.

"Of course not! Aren't you a Christian? And our only child? I'm sure you've never thought of such a thing. You ought to be ashamed even to say it!"

"I ought to be ashamed? *I?* It's you who ought to be ashamed! Think of what you've always been! You know yourselves! And now I want to raise you up, put you beside me! I'm pulling down that old rickety hut so that you'll forget the beggarly past. Father will never have to do another stroke of work to the end of his life! He can live like a gentleman! He's *my father!*" She pronounced the final words most haughtily—let her mother understand the importance and dignity of the relationship. "And you the same. You'll have everything provided. Not a thing to worry about. Sleep all you like, get up when you like. Have your breakfast brought to you in bed. Only wait till autumn! Have patience just for that

little time! And then. . . Mother—dear, if Father's so foolish, at least you be sensible. Calm him down, get him quiet! He'll get used to it! I don't want to find you here one day with the house fallen down about your ears!"

"But the house isn't as bad as all that, Ilze! It's quite strong, it'll last our time, and when we die. . ."

"Starting off about dying again? You know very well, Mother, I don't like to be crossed. And I don't want to sit waiting for you to die. Pikciurniene—that's another matter!" She stopped, feeling she was giving herself away, and quickly changed the subject. "I've given orders to the men to help you settle in," she said with impressive emphasis on the first three words.

"But Ilze, your father. . ."

"I don't want to hear another word!" Ilze cut her mother short and went out, banging the door. Now indeed Malonienė began to despair. What could she do, Heavens, what could she do now? Go to her son-in-law? But what use was that blockhead?

No, I'll go to Busė, she thought. I'll beg her, plead with her! Bad as she is, she's a human being!

So Malonienė ran to old Pikciurnienė.

"Busė, tell my daughter to think what she's doing! Dear God in Heaven!"

"And what is it she's doing?"

"Can't we go on living just another year or two in our home?"

"No, you can't! Your hour has come, Malonienė, mother of a landowner! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Malonienė felt she had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. She hurried out, slamming the door behind her.

Ilze too returned to her parents' home after taking a stroll in the garden. She intended to give her father a good scolding and show him her mind was made up. She would tell him that immediately after the wedding she had begun thinking how she could move her parents and where, so as to pull down the old house. It was nothing to boast of, standing there! Busė Pikciurnienė would point it out to everybody who came. "That's where she was born, that lovely wife my son's chosen! Acted like a fool, my son!" But if the house was gone, there wouldn't be anything to jeer at. The fields didn't matter, after all, one field looks just like another. But that house! . . . Pikciurnienė was right, it wasn't much of a dowry for a girl entering such a family. So she had to be clever. . . .

The men had already started pulling down the shed. One corner sagged so that the roof nearly touched the ground. It seemed to stoop like an old man.

But why had they stopped, why were they bareheaded? Was this the time to stand about, with work waiting to be done? And why did her mother suddenly fall on her knees and bow her head? What was it? Could something terrible. . . ?

Ilze came closer, and the labourers made way for her.

"Why have you stopped? What's happened?"

"Look for yourself."

Ilze went in and saw. She saw her father, Jonis Malone, lying on the ground. He did not move. And a piece of rope was still round his neck.

"Go for a doctor! Quick!"

Nobody moved. One of the men answered in a loud, jeering voice. "He's gone to find his own doctor. He doesn't need any of our help. You were in a mighty big hurry, Ilze, packing him off to the next world."

Ilze's face was deathly white. For a moment it seemed as though she would fall down on her father's body and weep. . . .

The mother raised her eyes to her stunned daughter, eyes of frenzy and agonized grief. Then she jumped up, raised her hands with the fingers crooked as though she would strangle Ilze.

"Monster! Murderess! It's you that's killed your father!" And Malonienė collapsed.

So they never used the cottage which Busė Pikciurnienė had prepared for them so carefully.

The widow had to be locked up in the old house until her husband was buried. She knew nobody, not even Ilze, and refused to recognize her as her daughter.

"No! We've never had a daughter. Why do you say I've a daughter? When did I ever have a daughter? Why do you think such things about me? I've always been a respectable girl, and I still am! And I'm so young yet! Of course, Jonis. . . Jonis will come back from Germany and then he'll marry me. But where's Mother, where's my Mother?"

"She's run away, out of the house, my Mother has. . . . What shall I do, they're beating her! He's gone to look for her, and they've both gone, why don't they come back? If only she hasn't drowned herself! She ought to be home by now! Because she always comes home, always! . . . I want something to eat. I'm so terribly hungry. But I haven't anything. If only Busė hasn't caught her. . . . No, no, Marė, it doesn't matter what you give me, I shan't eat it. I'd sooner starve. I saw Busė put a whole handful of arsenic into it, I saw her with my own eyes! A whole handful! A whole handful, the nasty wretch!"

"Do try to eat a little of this!" Marė Snekutikė begged her—Marė had been asked to look after the sick woman. "Your daughter made it all herself, boiled and baked everything. Look, I'm eating it, and nothing happens to me!"

"No, no! You can't fool me like that! I'm not so silly. . . . Yes, I know, Busė says she's my daughter. I know all about it! She does it so she can get in here and kill me! Don't I know? All she wants is for me to die! But I'm not going to die! She'll choke with her own bile first—look how yellow she is!"

"Malonienė, Busė's never been in here. She's terribly frightened now, she's locked herself in and hardly ever comes out. And your daughter loves you, she cries all the time because you're ill."

"Why do you tell me all these lies, you shameless girl? Has Busė bribed you to get rid of me?"

Malonienė was taken to hospital.

That autumn the hens clucked in a big new yard, and the geese and ducks swam contentedly in the fine, clean, deep pond. They felt just as much at home there as Ilze did in her husband's house. They had no longing for the broad fields outside the high wire fence.

But the window out of which Malonienė was to have admired the hens and geese remained empty, nobody looked out of it. Gradually it became dark with dust and dirt. Then one day a cock that had had the worst of a

fight with a young goose flew up and broke the pane. And so it remained, nobody took any notice of it.

Busè often came out now to look at the place where the Malone house had once stood. But it was not the poultry that attracted her eyes. She gazed over the even fields with their winter crops. All the land which had once belonged to Malone was sown to rye. It came up fine and thick. A pity Malonienne could not see how fields should be looked after, how they should be fertilized so as to give a real crop.

9

It was only after two years that the stork came to Ilze Pikciurniene, bringing a son, a sturdy, healthy young Pikciurna.

For two years Ilze's position had been anything but secure. If her husband had died in that time, she would have been left homeless. Her parents' house was pulled down and the land merged with the Pikciurnas' so completely that not a sign remained of the old boundaries.

And Busè Pikciurniene—perhaps of deliberate intent—kept the hut she had built for Ilze's parents standing empty.

True, everything was done properly, all the due forms were observed—all but one. Busè Pikciurniene refused point blank to include her daughter-in-law in the official list of landowners.

"She's my son's wife, that's enough!"

Ilze was no fool, she knew what that meant. But she held her tongue and waited. Time was on her side. . . . Busè Pikciurniene had moved to the part of the house allotted to her, but still dominated the whole of it. She made herself felt everywhere. It was with her that her son discussed everything, instead of with his wife. Busè wanted it that way. It mattered little to him—all he wanted was peace and quiet in the house.

All right, let her do as she likes, thought Ilze. I can bide my time. Now her time had come, with the birth of her son.

That day Busè Pikciurniene would not congratulate her daughter-in-law or even look at her grandson.

She must be grinding her teeth, thought the young mother with malicious glee. And she's got good reason! You're finished, Busè!

Ilze was thoroughly content. With the birth of a son she had struck such deep roots in the farm that even Busè would never be able to tear them out.

"Ilze dear, Mother wants to see the baby," said young Pikciurna the next day, when he dropped in for a moment to admire his heir. "Can she come?"

"No!" answered Ilze.

"What?" Pikciurna was startled. "But why not? Do you feel bad?"

"Yes, I feel bad."

"But Mother may be angry. There'll be trouble. You know what she is. . . ."

"She can do as she likes. I'm not afraid of her."

Jokubas went out; there was a sound of whispering outside the door.

"What? Is she crazy? No, no. . . ."

Then a door closed, and silence fell.

Ilze lay, a triumphant smile on her face.

A little later the door opened a crack and old Pikciurna crept cautiously through. He halted on the threshold and stood, rubbing his upper lip with his forefinger.

"Come in, come over here, Father, so you can take a real look at the young gentleman. How d'you like him?"

The old man came up and looked at the infant lying in the white cradle, covered with a white blanket.

"Aye, he's a fine boy! And just like you! The very image!" the old man cried ingratiatingly, even before he saw the baby's face. "Well, I'll be going along, they say you're still weak."

"No, Father, I feel splendid! Sit down and talk. How are you going on? I haven't seen you for ages. You never come and see us. Maybe Busè doesn't let you?"

"What's Busè got to do with it? . . . Though maybe I'd better be going, or she will be getting mad."

At this moment young Pikciurna came in in a state of perplexity.

"What shall we call the boy?" he asked and turned to the old man. "What do you say, Father? I was thinking, Ilze, of giving him your father's name. Let him be Jonis! Or even better—Johan. . . ."

"No!" said Ilze Pikciurniene.

"What, then? Jokubas? Like Father and me? All right, I know Mother'll want him to be Jokubas or Jurgis. . . ."

The young father was ready to rub his hands with delight when he saw Ilze smiling as though she agreed.

"No," answered Ilze.

"I don't understand. . . ."

"No, he won't be called Jokubas."

"But why?"

"I chose a name for him long ago."

"What have you chosen?"

"Horstadolf."

"Ilze!"

"What, don't you like it? Never mind—I like it, and that's what it'll be!"

"But Ilze, think! We're Lithuanians! There's no other child in Bena-giai with a name like that! Not one!"

"That's just it! I don't want a name you hear in every hut! And when my son grows up he can choose himself a surname too, whatever he wants. I can't stand your name. When I was little I always used to think—why are they called Pikciurna? And then I understood it was just what you all were—crossgrained, malicious. . . ."

Old Pikciurna slipped out. A moment ago Ilze had talked to him so kindly, and now look what she was saying! The old man was disappointed. But he would not tell anybody. What good would it do?

"Are you mad?" cried young Pikciurna, quite forgetting that the new mother must not be upset. "Change his name, indeed! I shall have a word to say to that! I'm his father!" Then, suddenly deflated: "Very well, let him be Horstadolf. But what shall I say in the Saulia¹ detachment? I've just joined. . . ."

¹ A Lithuanian nationalist organization of a semi-military nature.

"That's exactly why I chose the name. Just now you're sitting on the fence. Make up to the Lithuanians all you want, but don't forget to keep in with the Germans too, with their *Einheitsfront*.¹

"But why should I do that?"

"Because we don't know yet who'll come out on top."

"But I've nothing to do with politics."

"Jokubas, I want to rise in the world. And I'm going to. And I'm not going to let you be a nobody either! But we'll talk about all that later on. . . . Now, about the christening. . . ."

Yes, the christening! Ilze wanted to invite not only the Meikises and Benagys, but people from some really big estate—perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvis. Most genteel people! And then—the refreshments would have to be fitting. Better get a chef in from the city. They could kill a year-old calf and a pig, and as for the poultry—well, she'd settle that later on. . . .

"But do we really need to have it so grand, dear?" Pikciurna remonstrated. "Think what Mother'll say!"

"A-a-ah—your mother? You know, I'd like to show your mother how things ought to be done in a house like this. We celebrated our wedding in a beggarly way. Your mother was watching every coin and shaking in her shoes lest she spend an extra groschen. If we hadn't baked cakes and. . ."

"That'll do, Ilze!" Pikciurna cut her short peremptorily. He was stung by the reference to the beggarly wedding. "You'd better keep quiet about that! It wasn't I who brought beggars. You know well enough who my guests were. Who were you proud to see there? Who was it you fussed over and made eyes at? Who did you sit and joke with all the evening? The pastor! And who invited him? And who invited the teacher Giunteris? And the sergeant-major of the gendarmes with his wife? Who brought those?"

"A teacher and a gendarme! What an honour!" cried Ilze ironically.

"And what about you? You hid your guests away in some corner or other, but all the same everybody knew the whole lot were beggars. You drove one or two of them out, but there were still a dozen or so left, getting in the way of my guests. Did I invite the Silbakises or Bublis?"

"You might have invited them, but neither Silbakis nor Bublis would have come."

"And quite right too! They would have known they'd be out of place here."

"Oh, that's not the reason. . . . but never mind. I'll make up the invitation list myself, and then we'll see."

Ilze Pikciurniene celebrated the christening exactly as she wished. Snekutiene was in church and saw it all.

The next time she was in town she went to Magdè Silbakiene and poured out the news.

"Eh, Magdè, if you only knew! It must be the Day of Judgement coming! Heavens! The airs Ilze puts on! Just think. . . . The baby in a blue silk robe, and another of white gauze on top, right down to the ground. Like a cloud! A real cloud! And the pillow all silk and lace, blue and white! And all the ribbons! And violets! Now where on earth did she get violets at this time of year? Benagys' wife was in a very old-fashioned dress, but

¹ A German nationalist organization.

all silk, it kept rustling and rustling. But her daughter, you should have seen how smart she was! The very latest style! All sequins, like silver. Young Meikis was in a—a dress coat, I suppose it was, with a great long tail at the back! Like a swallow! And the other guests—just think, they'd got Germans too! And the way those Germans were dressed, I simply can't describe it. Everything fine and genteel, the German way! Three days they celebrated! Oh yes, but they didn't invite any of us! Well, of course, you live here in town, but they could have asked me, couldn't they? But not they! They didn't even ask my Marè to help in the kitchen! And it was Marè who looked after her mother when she was ill. Stupid, it was, for Marè to go there. Now think for yourself—all night long that poor Malonienne kept running up and down the room and Marè after her. Marè got worn right out, she could hardly stand on her feet when they took the poor woman to hospital at last. And what did she get for it all? Not even a 'thank you'!

"Yes, I was talking about the christening. I could have carried the baby" to the font, just as well. Of course I can't dress so fine as Mrs. Benagys, and my Snekutis' good clothes are all threadbare. Aye, homespun doesn't rub shoulders with silk. . . . But at least they could have asked us to the feast. Even the next day—to help eat up what was left. But no! And they say Busè was sitting away somewhere in a corner too. Whether she was sulking or whether Ilze arranged it that way, I don't know. And the old man was hanging about the yard and the hall, standing by one door and then by the other, hoping someone would notice him and ask him inside. But Ilze said right out: 'Yours is being taken to your room, Father.' Now what do you think of that? No room at the table for old Pikciurna! She ought to be humbly grateful to him, and not only him, Busè too! But she's as proud and puffed up as a turkey-cock! And who's got all that wealth together for her?

"M'yes. . . . What else did I want to say? They tell me Pikciurna went to his room and got drunk! Went out and bought it with his own money, and fuddled himself! And then he started singing at the top of his voice, for Ilze to hear! They say she didn't know where to look, first she was pale and then she was red. Aye, folks get to know everything. . . . And they say Busè ran off to the neighbours so as not to see and hear it all!

"What's that—you want to know about Malonienne? Oh, there's no hope for her. They say she was getting better. But then Ilze had to go there to visit her! And as soon as Malonienne saw Ilze, she began raving all over again! Awful, it was! She kept shouting: 'Hasn't your bile choked you yet?' So there you are, Magdè—you see what happens when a person only thinks of wealth and getting up in the world! Because it was she, that Malonienne, who got Jokubas all tangled up so he couldn't get out, like a fly in a web. And Malone too—think of his going and hanging himself! But it wasn't his fault, she tangled him up too! Only he cut himself free his own way, poor man!

"Oh, that Ilze, that Ilze! As soon as the child was born she showed what she was. Busè came to me the other day. Eh, and you should have seen the way she cried! I said to her, 'But Busè,' I said, 'what's the matter with you? Haven't you got everything anyone could want? What more do you need?' But she just went on crying. 'You don't understand, you haven't the brains,' she said. 'You haven't got a big house! And you haven't a hussy like that mincing about in front of you all the time!' Well

that's true, of course! But what I say is—it serves Busè right. Pride turned her head! And I've been thinking, Magdè—d'you know what's the difference between Busè and Ilze? Busè's always raging and storming, she's spent her whole life quarrelling with her family and the neighbours and the labourers; but no one's ever heard Ilze raise her voice or curse, you'd think she doesn't know how. She says what she wants, short and clear—and everyone obeys her. Just one word, and it's all settled! I don't know how long that will last, but that's the way it is so far.

“... Yes, have you heard? But how could you, living here? They say Ilze means to buy a house in town, and put it in her son's name. Now, where have they found all that money? And young Pikciurna's going in for politics. What side he's going to take nobody knows so far. Some say he goes with Meikis, and Meikis is in some kind of Lithuanian society or party or something—I don't know anything much about these things. And others say he's with Benagys all the time. And Benagys is in that German front. . . . I can't help laughing. Maybe it's a deputy in parliament he's wanting to be? They'll break their necks one of these days, mark my words!”

10

Snekutiene did not exaggerate. Pikciurna was sick of following the labourers round to see they were working properly. Why should he spend his life trailing about after ploughmen—in this Godforsaken hole Benagiai? Especially as he had the chance to become an important man, a big man! And what a chance! Meikis had literally grabbed him, and clung on. Ilze Pikciurniene would get her heart's desire!

“I tell you, *Mensch*,—stop running after that Benagys crowd,” Meikis warned Jokub. “Those Germans 'ull just pull you along like a bullock on a rope. But you won't get a thing out of them. You listen to me! You're a Lithuanian, your mother's a Lithuanian and so's your father. And you're all very highly respected. You can be the leading man not only in Benagiai but in the whole Memelland!¹ You can make a name in Kaunas, even! *Mensch*, if you knew what the governor said to me! ‘Can't you find me a man,’ he said, ‘a man like. . .’ Well, one like you, to put it in a nutshell. He wants someone to put into the Seim at the next elections. ‘*Selbstverständlich*,’ I told him, ‘I know a man who's very highly respected, a big landowner.’ ‘That's just what I want!’ he said. ‘We haven't had any Lithuanian landowners of our party in the Seim yet.’ ‘That's quite true,’ I said. ‘Landowners usually run over to those German *Grossagrariern*. But my Mr. Pikciurna won't do that.’ So you see where you are, Jokub. You'll be the first candidate on our list. The next—I'm not quite sure who the next 'ull be, and I'll be the third.”

Pikciurna's eyes were opened. Yes, Ilze had been right when she said he ought to seize his opportunity! Here it was, that opportunity! Soon there would be elections to a new Seim. Very well! Fight for the interests of the Lithuanian landowners!

When an election meeting was called in Benagiai, he offered to be the first speaker.

“I'll tell them what it's all about! . . . Oh, I know what to say!”

But the trouble was—writing was so terribly difficult. And Meikis

¹ Memelland—German name for Klaipeda district.

said he must certainly write out his speech, because it might be printed in the paper.

At the thought of people reading his speech in print, Pikciurna's chest swelled like a barrel.

In the end Mr. Pikciurna went to Mr. Meikis to ask whether his son, who was at high school, would come and write out the speech. He would dictate it himself, of course. He only needed it written in a plain, clear handwriting.

Young Ansis, the youngest of the family, was a modest boy. He left his father to answer for him.

"*Ja, selbstverständlich!* Go along, Ansis, and show what you can do! And don't disgrace yourself! The speech of our future deputy to the Seim must be *extra fein!* And be careful, don't make mistakes and don't put any German words in! They won't do at all this time. You're in the fourth form at school, you know how words are spelled. And when all's said and done—"

"Oh, I know all that," Pikciurna hastened to defend himself. "It's only—all this new-fangled language—"

"Since we've a young man getting such fine schooling we may as well make use of him! After all, it'll be a bit of preparation for his own political career. He's not going to laze about or dig manure with the farm hands when he finishes school. Well, Son. . ."

Ansis sweated for three days, and the speech was written *extra fein*. Then Pikciurna spent another three days learning it off by heart, and incidentally learning to read at the same time. Twice he went to Ansis to ask the meaning of some word.

It would all have been much easier in German, of course. He could have written it out himself and read what was written without any difficulty. But this Lithuanian—it didn't seem properly clear, somehow. All these strange words. . . Maybe it would have been better if he'd stopped with Benagys after all? If only there weren't so many people round about, all giving him advice! His mother said one thing, Ilze another! And Benagys stuck his nose in the air and snorted and hinted and laughed jeeringly. You never knew what he was thinking. But after all, Meikis had visited the president himself! And not only in Kaunas—on his estate, too. At a reception. Had tea with him, folks said. Meikis had a decoration already, and he was good friends with the governor. The governor even embraced him and said if there were more like him, things would be very different in Klaipeda district. It certainly was pleasant to be on friendly terms with such an important man. And that decoration? If Meikis had one, then he, Pikciurna, ought to get two at least! But, of course, he had to begin to do something first. Perhaps he really would get into the Seim. If he did, then it would all be plain sailing. But—again that Seim! Very few from the Association of Lithuanian Landowners ever got in. They would have had more, of course, if the farm labourers had voted the right way. But catch them doing that! Scum!

Pikciurna learned his speech off by heart, and prepared for the meeting.

It was held as planned. Nothing happened to hinder it. All the big farmers were there. A few of the poorer ones came too, of course, but that did not matter. The only thing was—that group over there in the corner, those woodcutters. . .

Pikciurna's heart beat fast when he took his seat on the platform with Meikis and the chairman of the Farmers' Association. Evidently there were no other speakers. Nobody had come from the city, although speakers had been promised. Perhaps they were simply late? Not very likely. Pikciurna would have to pull his socks up, make a longer speech than he had expected. And not say just anything either—he must make it interesting. Meikis was no orator. If only the chairman would spin out his report a bit, to fill up the time.

Meikis kept letting slip an *also* and *selbstverständlich*, so he spoke only for a short time—simply opened the meeting and gave the floor to the chairman of the Association.

Pikciurna's heart was still beating fast. That was not surprising—after all, for the first time in his life he was on a platform to speak, and to speak as a deputy in the Seim—that is to say, a future deputy! What a responsibility! If only the chairman would go on a little longer. . . .

But however long the chairman might ramble on about all the Association's plans and promises, he had to finish sometime. . . .

"And now I give the floor to deputy—I mean, to Mr. Pikciurna, whom we shall all elect to the Seim. . . ."

But here was a mess! Pikciurna was there, but the speech which had been so carefully written out by Meikis' youngest son had been left at home in the table drawer! Pikciurna discovered the fact only when Meikis gave him the floor. He felt frantically in pocket after pocket. Not a single sheet of paper. And even the opening which he had learned off by heart flew from his panic-stricken mind. . . . What the devil am I going to do now? How does it start? But this won't do—Pikciurna's the biggest farmer in Benagiai, it won't do for Pikciurna to lose his head! I'll have to speak often when I'm in the Seim! Often! I'll have to hold my own in debates with the *Einheitsfront*—that's nothing. I'll have to find answers for the workers too, and when they start heckling—! . . . Pikciurna's heart beat faster than ever, he sighed deeply, coughed loud and long, and commended himself to God.

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

There was some laughter—probably because the only representative of the "ladies" was Busė Pikciurniene, come to admire her son.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" Pikciurna repeated. (What came after that? Ah yes—Klaipėda is the lungs of Lithuania.) ". . . after all, even a fish cannot live without water. And Lithuania likewise cannot live without water—I mean—without a port. And in the same way a port without land equals naught." (I think that's what I wrote?) "But to prevent this port from being taken from us by the Germans" (aha, I've got the thread now!) "or worse still, by the Bolsheviks, we must be prepared to fight! And if need be—" (I think it was like that?) "if need be, to lay down our lives!"

"You don't say? All of you?" somebody jeered.

Meikis in the chair touched some rusty object which gave forth a warning rasp. Pikciurna felt bolder. If the chairman was calling the heckler to order, he must think Pikciurna carried some weight, and maybe his speech didn't sound so bad after all.

Pikciurna plucked up courage, his voice rang more loudly. As a true Lithuanian, born and bred among his people, he had resolved to fight for all that was Lithuanian. And of all things, the most important was the Lithuanian language "in which our fathers and mothers taught us to lisp.

our infant prayers. Although clouds may gather—" (no, he wanted to say that differently, more eloquently). "Like an oak by the mighty Niemen, Lithuanians stand unafraid, and our Benagai, like a fir tree green in winter in its glade."

Somebody cheered, somebody clapped. Pikciurna, however, was trying to collect confused thoughts. For this verse—adapted to fit the case—had been intended for a final flourish, and here he had blurted it out too soon. Never mind, perhaps he would remember something else when the time came.

Well—so he, as the biggest farmer in Benagai, had decided to cast all upon the scales (that had not been written down, but sounded good!)—to cast all upon the scales and fight! And of course, if he were elected to the Seim he would have great opportunities, his hands would be free. He could oleave a road for the Lithuanian people. . . . Of course, agriculture must be raised to a higher level! The former Seims had completely forgotten it. Farmers could not even feed themselves! Let alone dress themselves even half decently! A farm like his own, for instance, brought in so little that he couldn't afford to get iron tyres on the cart wheels, let alone other things. Why was grain so cheap? Who was to blame for that? Those Reds, of course! Of course it was all their doing! Why, everyone knew that in Karaliaucius—

"What are you agitating about?" someone shouted. "What's that Karaliaucius got to do with it?"

The chairman's bell rasped angrily.

"Gentlemen, I only wanted to give you an example. But never mind, we'll speak about the Seim. . . . What I wanted to say was. . . Yes, of course, the Seim! We all know what the German Seims were like. What good did they ever do us? They only led us into a bog, to the verge of a precipice, as the saying goes. It was nothing but townspeople, and they settled everything to suit themselves. Especially the Communists! They make all sorts of rules and regulations. . . ."

"Hey, hold your horses! What are you talking about? Who makes the laws?"

"I'm coming to the laws. Yes, what I wanted to say was. . . Yes—they make laws to protect the idlers, the unemployed. Now what are those unemployed? They are nothing more or less—" (Pikciurna's speech became more fluent!) "nothing more or less than the men who don't want to work! The work-shys! There's always work for those that want it! But of course, Gentlemen, it's much more pleasant to get money for nothing, to lie in bed and have everything brought to you—with maybe half a bottle to wash it down. . . ."

"Are you speaking from experience?"

"Yes, I'm speaking from experience," Pikciurna answered without stopping to think. "When a man comes to me and asks: 'Please, Mr. Pikciurna, what shall I do now?' then I know he's an idler. A good labourer doesn't ask what to do, he finds something. Looks about and finds it! But the kind that wait to be given a job, I tell them: 'Get out of here! There's no room for you in my house.' And that's what I shall say in the Seim. I shall bring with me the breath of a new spirit" (Pikciurna had never talked like this in his life before!) "—the breath of a new spirit! Each man must do his own work, and not waste his time on politics. . . ." (What came after that?

Damn those notes!) "No decent, respectable person can possibly vote for the *Einheitsfront*. Their list is full of nothing but atheists who don't believe in loving your neighbour. And they're not far removed from the most terrible thing of all, the Bolsheviks. . . . I meant to say the Communists or workers who say there's no need to have churches, they all ought to be turned into restaurants or dance halls and—yes, into dance halls and theatres.

"But where should we be without God? I can give you an example. One night I had to drive home late from Sveksna. And I had with me—what's his name—one of my men. Well, we came to Skomanto Hill. And everybody knows that place is haunted. So I said to him, to that labourer, 'Krizas,' I said, 'this is a bad place. . . . What if we see a ghost, or—that sort of thing. You say a prayer and I'll do the same.' But that Krizas, he just said: 'But surely, Sir, excuse me, you're not—you don't believe in all those silly tales, do you? It's all superstition!' 'No,' I told him, 'it's not superstition, it's God's own truth!' But he just said: 'Then tell me, Sir—if a spirit does appear, what kind is it—a good one or a bad one?' So I asked him: 'Do you believe in God?' And what do you think he said? Right away, without even stopping to think! 'No,' he said, 'I believe in neither God nor devil!' That's what he said! 'Neither God nor devil!' And what happened? The very next day when he was climbing up a ladder in the hayloft, a rung broke and he went crashing down, and there he lay with a broken leg. Writhing there on the ground screaming for help. So then I went up to him and said: 'Well, do you believe in God now? Why didn't I climb up that ladder? Why didn't I break my leg? Because I believe in God!' . . . And I can tell you another case. . . ."

"Never mind your cases! Come to the point!"

"Am I not speaking to the point? I ask you, Gentlemen, not to interrupt. I can see that you there, over in the corner—that's all you've come for, to make yourselves a nuisance. If I'd known before, I'd have had the police here. But it doesn't matter, I know you, I know you one and all! And another thing I can say—it's you and such as you that are creating disorder in the country. You want to tear down everything that we have built . . . to destroy all we have created with our blood and sweat.—"

And then it began!

Before Pikciurna could even finish his sentence there was such a noise that he had to stop.

"Hey, d'you hear that? Pikciurna's sweat? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Where've you done your sweating? In a feather bed?"

"Show us your hands! Where's your callouses?"

Suddenly he saw two men moving towards the platform with a slow deliberate step; the floor trembled under their feet—at least that was how it seemed to Pikciurna. What massive shoulders they had, and what hands! One of them rolled up his sleeve.

"Pikciurna—who was it built that house of yours? You or us? We want an answer! . . . Well? . . . Who was it fell in your yard and was so badly crippled he still goes about on crutches? You or Skriauda? And where were you when your labourer was lying there unconscious? Where were you—with your sweat?"

Pikciurna's face blanched, he looked round from side to side for help. The chairman's bell rasped, sputtered and fell silent.

"Come on—out with it—where have you poured out all this blood and sweat?" shouted one of the woodcutters. "Here, wait a bit, don't slink off! We haven't heard anything new from you yet—except about that blood and sweat of yours!"

Pikciurna had shrunk back to the table, farther from the workers. The chairman whispered something to him, rose, and again the bell rasped.

"Gentlemen, Gentlemen, order, please! We want—what else have we on the agenda? Nothing more, I think. . . ."

But the noise did not subside.

Meikis, Pikciurna and a few more like them were trying to push their way through to the exit when the door suddenly opened and Bubliss appeared, with Staigys looking over his shoulder.

"Late, are we? Too late to hear the new speaker? What a shame! He didn't want to wait for us! What a hurry you're in, Gentlemen!" laughed Bubliss. He came in, exchanging greetings with his friends here and there while Meikis, Pikciurna, the chairman and the other members of the Association hurried out, one after the other.

Although Pikciurna's first public appearance had been no brilliant success, he got into the Seim without any especial difficulty.

11

"Stay in bed a bit more, dear, try to rest a little! Everything's going to be all right, only don't fret!" Trude Bubliss implored her sick husband. "At least I can feel now that you need me!" she added in a feeble attempt at a joke. But as she straightened the blanket she tried to conceal the trembling of her hands.

They trembled from weariness, from the long nights spent at her husband's bedside, fighting for his life. At first they had thought the illness was only ordinary influenza. Then had come severe headaches, a high temperature and loss of consciousness. Now he was getting better, the danger was over—not so much because of the doctor and his medicines, as thanks to Bubliss' own strong constitution and Trude's devoted nursing. They had had to call the doctor twice. They really should have had him a third time, but there was no money to pay him. Even for the second time they had collected it not lit by lit, but cent by cent. She had handed it to the doctor in small coins. He had even frowned when he saw it.

"Damn this weakness, I'm sick of it!" Bubliss answered her. "I'm going to try getting up, see what my legs feel like! What do you say, Trude?"

Trude was pleased to see him impatient; it meant he was getting better. But she answered with restraint.

"I think you ought to stay in bed just a few days more," she objected. "If you once get up, you won't go back again. And what if you have a relapse? You ought to get your strength back first."

Get his strength back! What bitter irony there was in the words! As Trude said them she felt her throat contract. She did not dare look her husband in the face. What was he to get it from? Would boiled potatoes and salt give it to him? Or black bread?

A good thing that Viktoriukas was working, at least. He did not make much, but it was something. Though it did seem a shame for the boy.

There he was, doing a man's job and getting only sixty per cent of a man's wage—because he was still under age.

While her husband was ill, Bublione had not been able to leave the house. And he himself had been unemployed for a long time. Had it not been for the Silbakises, who helped them a little now and then. . . But they themselves were living from hand to mouth. A good thing Silbakis did at least have a steady job.

Bublis had to have good food. But where was it to come from?

"Well, Trude, tomorrow I shall get up, anyway!" said Bublis decidedly.

"We'll see about that! There's better ways of committing suicide! Now you just lie quiet, try to get some sleep while I go and make dinner."

She might talk of "making dinner," but the pantry was bare. A good thing it was Friday, tomorrow Viktoriukas would bring fifteen lits. But today? Must she go to Magdè again? Nothing else to be done!

So Trude hurried over to her sister.

Bublis did not go to sleep. He had had quite enough of sleep during his illness, although it had been snatches of tormented delirium and stupor, not the real sleep that refreshes. Today, however, his head was clear; he wanted to know so many things, everything stirred him, everything concerned him. . . . How could he sleep? Had anyone been from the Union Works, he wondered? He wished one of them would look in and tell him how things were going. Yes, he must certainly get up tomorrow, or the next day at the latest, or he would be dropping right out of everything. The very surroundings here on Sand Street gave one that feeling—it was so quiet, one could almost say—cosy! There were no people nor traffic about—and if some rare vehicle did pass, it simply raised a cloud of dust. . . . Though of course it was autumn now with pouring rain, and the street was deep in mud. . . . Bublis began to feel that the house was far too quiet. Even the clock had been taken out into the kitchen. No sound from Trude either, no rattle of bucket or clang of frying pan. Bublis smiled grimly—what had she to put into a pan, anyway? What could she fry? And how on earth did she manage to feed two strapping men? Where did she get the food? What a woman! What a manager! She worked miracles!

When would he be able at last to make life easier for her? When would he bring about all that they had hoped for, all these years? He could not do it alone. Many hands were needed, great forces. Those forces were growing, but they were not yet strong enough. And now a new danger had appeared across the Niemen. Fascism was in power in Germany, and the country had become one big concentration camp. In the Klaipeda district, too, the local Nazis were making themselves heard more and more. All the dregs, the paltry cravens, the rogues and adventurers got a welcome from them. And many who had only recently been ranting about being such devoted Lithuanian patriots were scuttling to them in the hope of catching some of the crumbs Hitler might let fall. Calling themselves pure-blooded Aryans. He had heard, for instance, that Pikciurna had become a "real German." Pikciurna was still in the Seim—but as one of the *Einheitsfront* now. How long was it, by the way, since Bublis had seen him at that election meeting in Benagiai? Four years, it must be.

He passed his hand over his face. Better not think about all that, it only made his head ache.

Jurgis Bublis seldom recollected the past, he much preferred to think of the future. But now, lying in bed with nothing to do, his mind ranged

far back. He thought of his parents—so young and ignorant they had been when they married, so worried about how to earn enough for the winter and maybe put something by for a rainy day. They talked things over—where was the best place to work, where were seasonal workers paid the best. Finally they went haymaking. They were so young, so inexperienced, especially his mother, that they did not even keep count of the hours they worked.

The meadows stretched for thousands upon thousands of acres. On the one side was the water and the bare sand-dunes of Nehring, and on the other nothing but meadows right to the horizon. Dozens of miles separated them from the nearest house.

And there on the meadows a son, Jurgis, was born.

The child lived, but the mother bled to death.

So Jurgis was brought up by his grandmother, his father's mother. The father never forgot his dead wife, but he bore his grief in silence. He was always serious and thoughtful. Sometimes when he came home from work he would stroke the child's head and look into his eyes. . . . Jurgis knew now what his father had been seeking—the likeness of his wife. Little Jurgis would forget all else when he gazed into his father's thoughtful face. And so they would commune without words.

As the child grew bigger, the old grandmother began to teach him the little which had once been taught to her. She told him about the sky and the angels, about hell, about a vengeful God who spoke to men with the voice of the thunder as he walked upon the clouds and shook the earth and its dwellers.

But the child had an active mind, he very soon began to think for himself and found a great deal that was not very clear in what his grandmother told him.

"If the thunder is the voice of God, then why does God only talk to people in the summer, when it's hot? And why does it always rain after God's been talking to people? Why doesn't God say anything in the winter? Don't people ever do anything wrong when it's cold?"

"Hold your tongue, chatterbox!" the old woman said angrily. "That's godless talk! Everything is God's will. The Lord talks to His people when he wants. It's not for us to tell Him what to do!"

"Maybe He'd like to talk to us in winter, but it's too cold for him, walking about up there on the clouds?" the child wondered.

"Will you be quiet or not?"

But here the father interfered.

"Mother, I've asked you before not to fill his head up with all those old tales!"

Later on his father undertook his education. He taught the boy to think for himself, to try to understand things, although he himself could explain very little of them.

Jurgis was fifteen when his father was arrested and put in prison. He never came back. He was taken because a rich man had been found killed in the village. Somebody had to pay for that, so they took Bubliss, who was known as a godless unbeliever. "Witnesses" were dug up who swore they had heard him quarrelling with the murdered man.

Later on, when the real murderer was found, the Insterburg Prison reported that the convict Bubliss had died.

The shock of all this was too much for the grandmother. She lost all faith in God and man, and died of grief and despair.

At about this time a number of young fellows decided to go and look for work in the Ruhr, in the foundries. Jurgis Bubliss went too.

He returned four years later. He found a poor welcome. He was still called the son of a murderer. Finally, he went to look for work elsewhere.

It was at this time he met the gentle, fair-haired Trude Karnelike.

Then came the war. And then the revolutionary struggle, setbacks, prison. . . .

Bubliss sat up in bed. He wanted to know if sitting up would make his head start aching again. No, he only felt dizzy and rather weak. He must get the better of that weakness. And he would.

To have such a companion in life meant everything. She understood him, she supported him in the struggle. She knew that struggle was for all, not for him alone. And she was always beside him.

Their son! Bubliss stretched out his arms as though to embrace the boy. Perhaps it was foolish, but there was nobody to see him. He had been born late, their son, when they had already given up hope. But what a son! One who would really carry on his father's work.

Sounds came from the kitchen, a door opened and closed again. Somebody sat down, sighed heavily. Silence.

"Who's there? Trude—is that you?"

Nobody answered, but there was another deep sigh.

12

Trude had to stay longer than she wished with Magdè Silbakiene. Snekutiene had come—full of gossip as usual. Trude much preferred that Barbe should not know why she was there—Barbe could never be trusted to hold her tongue, by tomorrow it would be all round the village that Trude had nothing to eat. So she sat chatting and laughing with her sisters, asking about this and that, although the news from Benagiai did not interest her particularly—especially as she had already heard most of it.

Pikciurna was a deputy, and all sorts of fine gentlemen were always coming in cars to see him. And Ilze went about in rustling silk the whole time, she even put on a silk dress to go to the cow-houses.

"Although, of course, she never does any work there! . . ."

Ilze had begun making up to old Pikciurna, he had been to see the Snekutises and had been full of praise for his daughter-in-law.

She often went to the city, Ilze did, to her new house, and stopped there a long time. Hadn't Trude or Magdè ever met her? No? But it wasn't such a big city! . . . Ilze spent her time there because she couldn't get along with Busè.

"What d'you expect? They're a pair, six to one and half-dozen to the other!"

And then, of course, it was much more convenient to give parties in town. Eh, how Barbe Snekutiene did wish she could see, just once, what rich people's parties were like in the city! . . . And Busè, she was getting old, of course, and all she did was sulk and grumble at her son's wife. Nothing Ilze did could please her.

"Ilze bought a house in town—that's wrong. What did she buy it for? Isn't the manor good enough for her? When the master and mistress are

away, work's never done properly, everything's wasted and squandered! Jokubas is in the Seim—and that doesn't suit her either. Trying to ape the nobility! All Ilze's big ideas! The hussy—got everything but the stars in the sky! Such a fine estate! Ilze wears a hat instead of a kerchief. That's not right either, it's not becoming a farmer. There's only one thing Busè likes—Jokubas has become a real fine gentleman. Everyone she sees, she keeps dinnin' it into their ears: 'My son, the one that's a deputy!' As though she'd got a dozen sons! Oh those Pikciurnas! Will I ever live to see their end?

"Yes, what was I saying? I'm getting old, I forget everything. . . . Magdè dear, have you ever been in Ilze's new house, on President Street? No? But I have! The other day I just walked up and rang the bell. I knew she was in town. I wanted to see how she looks when she's here. And why shouldn't I go to see her? It's true I didn't find her at home, but the maid took me all round and showed me everything. And—eh, my word! In Benagai they live like dukes, but here! It's Paradise, no other word for it, just Heaven! When Ilze dies she can say to Almighty God: 'I don't need any Heaven of yours, I've had my Heaven on earth!' But she doesn't bring Horstadolf here with her. He's still little, he might be in her way! And what does she do, I'd like to know, that the child would be in the way? And Busè doesn't want even to set eyes on the boy. She calls him: 'That brat of Ilze's.'"

"Wagging tongues never tire," burst from Bublione; she could not stand her older sister's gossip.

"Who d'you mean that for? Not me, I hope? That's all right, then. . . . What a handsome man your Viktoriukas is going to be! Who ever would have thought you'd bring up such a fine son, Trude! Although I hear he's following his father's ways, poor boy! Eh dear, he'll find himself in jail too, one of these days! There's no escaping the hand of God! And it's a godless son you've brought up, Sister! . . ."

At last Snekutiene took herself off, and Magdè Silbakiene gave Trude something for dinner.

She hurried home, glanced into the kitchen—and stopped dead. There was Viktoriukas sitting by the table, his head in his hands. The last breadwinner out of work, was the thought that flashed through Trude's mind. But she must not show the boy how much it alarmed her. Hadn't Magdè dropped a word about work for Trude? . . . She would have to run over and see tomorrow. . . . It would be something, at least. . . .

"What's the matter, Son? Are you ill? Maybe you'd better lie down a bit?"

"No, Mum, I'm not ill. But I can lie down all I want now."

"Why?"

"Sacked."

"Sacked?"

She said it with a note of surprise. But she had known it would happen sometime. Troubles never come singly.

"How was that?"

"I don't know how to tell you. It's disgusting. And I don't understand all of it, either."

"Did someone report you? You took leaflets in yesterday."

"Yes, somebody must have been talking. But it's not only that, Mum."

"Don't get upset, Son! We won't say anything to Father. Let him get

his health back first. But you must tell me everything. We must decide what's best to do."

"It's that Gliega that's so horrible."

"Gliega? Who's Gliega?"

"The manager."

"What did he want with you?"

"Well it's this way. I've noticed a long time he seemed to be sort of watching me, sometimes he'd start being awfully friendly in a queer way, coming round with a silly kind of smile. I thought he knew what I was doing and was trying to catch me out. Then this morning Seskus came to me, that's one of his toadies—he came up with the same silly smile, and said: 'Go to the manager, he's waiting for you in his private office.' All the men who heard were worried, and one fellow—Pareigiukas, you know him, I've told you about him—he came hurrying over and said: 'Viktoras,¹ don't go, listen to me, don't go!' But I thought it was something to do with work, so I went."

"And what happened?"

"I went in. Gliega was sitting on a sofa with a small table in front of him, and a lot of good things on it—apples and sweets and a bottle with two glasses. I asked him what he wanted me for. And he said: 'Don't be so standoffish, come here, sit down and talk to me. . . . I want to give you easier work. It's too hard for you, the work you're doing. You will ruin all your youth! Sit down! Have a drink!' I told him I don't drink. And he said: 'What, not drink? Haven't you learned yet? All workers drink.' And—well, he proposed all kinds of things, and then he pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and told me to sign it."

"What was on it, that paper?" Trude felt the blood draining from her face.

"I don't know. I jumped up and the table fell over. I think I called him a swine. And then, Mother, his face went all twisted, he was in such a rage! But you know, when he got furious like that, I stopped being frightened. Then he pulled one of the last leaflets I brought out of his pocket and shouted: 'Who brings these filthy sheets into the factory?' And I told him: 'Since it's in your pocket, you ought to know best. Why d'you ask me?' I could see he was trying to speak quietly. And then he started off again saying I was so young, and I was following my father's ways already. And didn't I know what I could get for those leaflets? Didn't I know they were inciting one part of the population against another? If I didn't know what that meant, he could explain it. . . . He talked and talked a long time, I didn't listen to it all. But he made it clear that if I kept in with him, I'd be well off. I'd never have to carry beams and I'd always have plenty of money in my pocket."

"But I told him I'd sooner carry beams honestly than fill my pockets with dirty money. Then he started yelling at me, he yelled so that somebody opened the door and looked in. He shouted that he could grind me to powder, crush me like a worm if I didn't obey him. I told him I wasn't going to work any more, I was going home. He went on shouting something more but I didn't hear what it was, I just ran away. . . . But, Mother, maybe I ought to go back? It's pay-day tomorrow! And if I don't, I shan't get anything."

¹ Viktoras—Viktoriukas when addressing a child.

Trude had never been lavish with expressions of affection, but now she went up to her son, put her arm round him and drew him close.

"No, Viktoras, you won't go back there any more."

"But what will he do with the leaflet? That Seskus who gave it to him probably informed on all the men who read it. If I don't go back they'll dig down further. And besides, I—I gave him a sock in the jaw. . . ."

"And you did quite right, Son! I hope you gave him one that'll stop him trying that sort of thing again. Don't be afraid of anything, be like your father!"

13

Bublis got up a few days later.

"Well, can we talk to you now?" asked his comrades when they came to visit him.

"You can, and you should!" smiled Bublis. "It's a long time since I've seen you! And a long time since we've talked things over."

"We've been here often enough, but you were not receiving!"

"Oh, is that so?" Bublis gave a searching look at his wife, but Trude slipped quietly out of the room.

"It's not her fault! But it's good that we can really discuss things now."

There was plenty to discuss. A representative of the Central Committee of the Party had come from Kaunas bringing a message. The Central Committee warned them that conditions for political work in Klaipeda district might become more difficult. Instead of fighting Hitler's adherents who were becoming bolder than ever, Smetona's fascist government was hounding the Communists and all progressives. Under the wing of the government, the Nazis were preparing to tear Klaipeda away from Lithuania. They were operating together with the Voldemar group of fascists, whom Germany was helping to seize power in Lithuania itself. The Central Committee said work must be intensified among the Klaipeda proletariat of all nationalities, to show concretely that the Nazis were using the slogan of a German national movement as camouflage. Therefore, the Klaipeda Communists would have to play a most important role in the struggle against the Nazis and for the liberation of Lithuania.

Bublis listened in silence, then rose and began to pace the room, as he often did.

"So that's how it is, Comrades!" he said. "There's a smell of gunpowder, and we're in the front lines. . . . Well, we'll do our best to stand firm."

"We've started to act already. Have you heard?"

No, Bublis did not know that yesterday the Nazi propaganda ship *Prussia* had left for the last time that year.

Every time that ship appeared, something like a demonstration was arranged in Klaipeda port. The ship's siren would scream out the news of its coming to the local Nazis, and the band would play *Deutschland über alles* and the *Horst Wessel* song.

And yesterday, when the ship was due to sail, nearly all the Nazi lick-spittles in the city had come to the port again. As soon as the siren sounded and the ship began slowly to move—as though reluctant to go—they raised an indescribable din.

The police were there with guns and rubber truncheons, but they did nothing. Only when the Nazis went a bit too far and began to hustle

peaceable passers-by, they fired a few shots, and killed a docker—a lad of nineteen.

"The dockers took that as a challenge. One and all, German or Lithuanian, they decided to hit back."

"Quite right!" said Bubliss. "Well, what then?"

"The dockers showed they understand all about the attempts to divide them into Germans and Lithuanians and set them against each other. And when they started to act—the Nazis scampered off with their tails between their legs. The whole port was clear of them in a quarter of an hour. And this time the *Prussia* left without any *Horst Wessel*. There's going to be a demonstration tomorrow. The workers at the cellulose factory proposed it themselves and the Luise Plywood Mill backed them up. The victim is going to be carried through the whole city."

"The police won't dare to show themselves this time!"

"Let them just try!"

"Well. . . . What else?"

There was news in plenty. The Klaipeda Seim was to meet in a few days to discuss unemployment relief and wages. The bosses were making their own preparations. Just this morning the machines had been stopped in the Union Mineral Fertilizer Works and all the workers discharged. Obviously a temporary stoppage. To scare the workers. But although there were hundreds of unemployed round the factory gates, not one had gone in to ask for a job. They all backed up the discharged men. The main thing, though, was that the authorities were trying to prevent the contract with the Soviet Exportles being carried out. What did it matter to them that this contract would provide work for nearly three thousand men? They kept harping on the one thing. "We've got enough bother with our own Communists! Want to poison the whole air?"

So a demonstration was to be held on the day when the Seim discussed labour questions.

"Everything ready?"

"It will be. There'll be the sawmill workers, the Union and the Luise. This morning there's to be a meeting of the unemployed. It'll choose a new board for the mutual aid fund, but the demonstration will be discussed, as well."

"You know, I think I'll go with you," said Bubliss. "I was a member of the board too, and the unemployed all know me. Trude, where's my jacket?"

Trude came running in alarmed from the kitchen.

"Jurgis, can't you stop at home for at least one more day? Wait till tomorrow to go out!"

But Jurgis was not listening. The excitement made his hands tremble, his legs buckled under him, but he tried to hide it. From Trude, however, nothing could be hidden. She went to the cupboard and took out her coat and shawl.

"Where are you going?"

"With you!"

"With me? There's no need for that! What a woman—!"

Trude and Viktoras went with Bubliss and his comrades to the unemployed meeting.

It was in full swing when they arrived. Police caps were very much in evidence by the doors and inside the packed hall. There were so

many of them that Bubliss had to laugh: "Oho! A regular guard of honour!"

Bubliss was recognized at once; there were greetings from all sides, and way was made for him to the platform.

From there he could see everything. In spite of the large numbers of police, the atmosphere was charged to the danger point, and the crowd was obviously angry with the speaker.

"Why, it's Kisliuss, that Social-Democrat in the Seim," said Bubliss, peering up at the rostrum. "What rubbish is he talking?"

The noise increased. Kisliuss was hot, he took out a large handkerchief, mopped his face, and hurried to finish.

"I must warn you once more that we cannot demand much. There are many unemployed, work is scarce, and we won't get anything out of the employers by force. . . ."

He assured his hearers that the Social-Democrats had the workers' true interests at heart, that they were trying to get some sort of concessions, some sort of reforms, to get some crumbs at least, because even crumbs mattered. "A chicken pecks its food grain by grain and gets fat." The meeting must have confidence in him. He and his comrades, the Social-Democrats, thought only of the workers and therefore he advised all present to elect Social-Democrats to the board.

Here, however, the noise became so great that the speaker's voice was completely drowned out. Kisliuss looked from side to side in confusion, but from right and left the shouts came like bullets:

"Lickspittle!"

"Judas!"

"Crumb-picker!"

"Away with the scum!"

"Double-dealer!"

Bubliss could see more and more police pushing their way into the hall. If this noise goes on, he thought, they'll break up the meeting. And despite his weakness, he rose and asked for quiet.

While he waited for the noise to die down, he let his eyes travel over the faces of the people in the hall. In most of them he saw resolution, firm courage, enthusiasm, but in some there was apathy, disappointment, even something like reproach. No, the unemployed didn't have an easy time of it, not by a long way! The women's faces were weary with anxiety over trying to make ends meet and get a cup of milk for the children now and then. How Bubliss wished he could take their hands, put an arm round their shoulders and say: Don't despair, dear friends! We're going to change everything.

The noise died down, and Bubliss began to speak. His voice was clear, but not very loud, and Trude thought he should perhaps not have tried to speak today—he was still so weak!

"Mr. Kisliuss advises us not to demand too much. Like all the mill owners, landowners and rich men generally, he is horrified whenever the workers or the unemployed demand even half-way decent conditions. If you were to go by what the Social-Democrats say, we workers ought just to bow humbly to the bosses and ask their charity, beg for the crumbs which fall from their loaded tables. We know how much the bosses worry about our needs, how wonderfully they look after us! We've had a taste of their kindness! Just now they're throwing hundreds of people at the Union on to the

street. But they're making a bad mistake if they think they'll find any strike-breakers among us—they won't. Our future depends on ourselves alone, Comrades, on our resolution and our unity. None of the authorities will lift a finger to help us. Have you ever heard of a bourgeois government siding with the workers. What did it do to protect the cellulose workers from German exploitation? What has it done for the workers at the Textile Mill? Or the Union? Nothing! Exactly nothing! Fines often eat up half a man's wages. Those capitalist gentry clap on fines whenever they like. All they do is think out new ways of fining the workers, so as not to pay them their wages."

Bublis' voice rang out more strongly. People drank in every word with eager attention. And a movement ran through the hall when he said: "We do not *ask* for work for the unemployed, we *demand* it. Those who cannot be given work for the moment must be paid relief that ensures the living minimum. And we must declare our support for the demand of other workers that fines be lifted. We demand higher wages. We demand a revision of the social insurance law that eats into the rights of workers—"

The excitement in the hall was mounting and there were shouts of approbation.

"That's true! Bravo! Go on, go on!"

"There's one more demand, a very important one. We workers of the Klaipeda district, whatever our nationality, German or Lithuanian, must demand that our workers' organizations be permitted to exist legally. All the concessions are made to Hitler's fascists, all the favours are shown to them. So, therefore, we must oppose them with our united front, a front of all workers, Lithuanians and Germans! We must unite because our interests are the same. And we'll not stand for any attempts to keep us down. We want complete freedom for our meetings—"

"Bravo! Bravo!"

"We want freedom!"

"We want work!"

The police would not let Bublis speak any more, and the meeting was closed.

14

The grey old town hall stood on Luise Street, just opposite the place where the monument used to be. The building had been old even at the time when Queen Luise of Prussia, fleeing from Napoleon, came to Klaipeda. It had been given to her, her husband and children because the town, at that time a fishing village, had none better. And since she had graciously consented to honour this building with her presence, a memorial plaque had been put up in the corridor and her portrait, life-size, hung in the conference hall to remind all who had the honour to enter it that a queen had once lived there.

It was in this hall, beneath the portrait, that the Seim held its meetings. Here young Pikciurna had his seat, here he voted and here he earned his salary as deputy. The work was not very onerous, especially as he was an experienced man. For a number of years before this he had sat in the Seim as one of the Lithuanian Landowners' Group. Of course, choosing that party had been a mistake which could not but bring undesirable consequences; he had had to let the grass grow over it, as the saying goes, to let it be forgotten.

And forgotten it was, thank Heaven. The new trend distracted attention from Pikciurna—or to be more exact, it brought him before the public eye in a different way. The really important thing was that he had managed in good time to declare himself German through and through, a champion of the Reich and the Führer. There had been many in Klaipeda who were not yet sure whether Hitler would manage to get power in Germany and had hesitated to declare themselves his followers. But Pikciurna did not hesitate, no, he was not that kind of man! True, he again only just escaped doing something irretrievably foolish. He almost joined Pastor Zas' pro-Hitler group. People were buzzing round this drunken pastor like flies round a honey pot. But Benagys put him wise.

"Are you mad, Pikciurna? Tomorrow I'll bring you a real leader of the Sovogo,¹ Herr Doktor Neumann, you can join them."

Pikciurna followed this advice. Had he not done so, he would not have been sitting in the Seim today. But Benagys trusted him. It was Benagys who had got him in—Benagys and Ilze. With a wife like Ilze you'd always be on top!

Ilze knew how to get what she wanted. She had had the salon in her town house decorated as she wished, and there she received her guests. She herself had never been so handsome as now. The circle of her acquaintances was spreading. Deputies, important officials, big landowners, and factory owners all came to her house.

But one couldn't say Ilze Pikciurnienė spent her whole time in the city. No, she visited Benagai, too, quite often. There were things which only she could get done.

Pikciurna himself, it is true, would have preferred never to see Benagai, he was quite content to live in town. But the trouble was, the Seim would meet for a day or two, or maybe three, and that would be the end until the next month. That was one thing, and the second was that if he did not go home, that is to say, to Benagai, his income as deputy would not come to very much. There would be none of those expense items that mounted up to such a good round sum. So. . . .

One day, however, young Pikciurna was called home by a telegram brought to him right at a meeting of the Seim. Of course it was pleasant to feel himself so important, but all the same, why did they want him in all this hurry? Ilze had been in Benagai for over a week already, a long time. And the telegram was queer. Why did she have to send a telegram?

Young Pikciurna did not like riddles, so he took the evening train. He whistled cheerfully as he walked along the platform; the cigar he lighted tasted good. Why worry? He would know what it was all about in a few hours. Perhaps a horse had broken its leg, or some labourer had run off. Nothing to get excited about.

However, he learned the whole story sooner than he expected. The whistle had already sounded when the door burst open and—Pikciurna could hardly believe his eyes—his Aunt Snekutiene tumbled into the compartment. She was on her way home from a visit to the city.

"Well now, Jokubas!" she cried, beaming. "Now isn't this nice that I've met you! I suppose you don't even know all that's been happening at home, in Benagai, do you?"

¹ A Nazi organization in Klaipeda.

"The devil alone knows what it's all about!" cried Pikciurna. "They brought me a telegram right at a meeting of the Seim! I've no idea what they want."

"Ah, don't you know? Then I'll tell you all about it, the whole story. . . ."

Snekutiene settled herself more comfortably, and Pikciurna felt that the story would be a long one.

"Yes, one thing I declare—God's no longer in His Heaven. No! Maybe He was once, but now He's not! I'm beginning to think the way Bubliss does. . . . And after all, what does the Holy Writ say?—'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.' Now tell me—what is that child going to do now?"

"What child?" asked Pikciurna, intrigued.

"Why, Petras, your shepherd lad! They found him the day before yesterday. . . . But I don't know where to start with it all. You see, it was this way. One day Petras disappeared. Disappeared, and that was all! Nobody bothered looking for him. And after all, why should they, when Ilze said he'd gone to visit his mother? She's a widow with a whole houseful of children, and she's very poor. So Ilze said he'd gone to see his mother and she'd even given him a big loaf and some other things so there'd be something to eat at home. And then—all of a sudden your mother found her savings bank book had disappeared and a whole pile of money that was with it. Heavens, you should have seen how she carried on! Busè came running over to me screaming like a madwoman with 'Barbe! Oh Jesus! Jesus! Barbe!' She was tearing her hair, and then she started beating her head against the wall, I tell you, I was scared out of my wits, I thought she had gone out of her mind. Don't be angry, Jokubas, I'm telling you just what happened. I called my husband and I said to him: 'Hold her, Snekutis, hold her!' I was so scared I even forgot his first name. . . . 'Hold her,' I told him, 'she's gone mad!' And she started yelling at me: 'You're mad yourself! You're raving yourself.' So I said to her: 'Busè dear,' I said, 'it's not me that's screaming for Jesus, I'm not trying to knock down the wall with my head.' And she comes back with 'You'd be calling Jesus and beating the wall too if your money'd been stolen!'"

"What's that? Money been stolen? When? Who took it?" cried Pikciurna, alarmed.

"Yes, money!" snapped Snekutiene, angry at the interruption. "Don't muddle me, I'm telling you everything just as it happened. . . . Well, I said to her: 'Dear Busè,' I said, 'money is the root of all evil. I thank the Lord God that I have none, for then I can never fall into temptation, and never have to suffer because of it.' But she only said: 'Hold your tongue! What shall I do now? Where can I go? Oh Jesus, Jesus!' And I said to her: 'Where can you go? God's eye is everywhere. Better tell me what's happened! And don't scream as though someone was murdering you!'"

"Well, so then she told me all about it. She called on God and Jesus, she cursed the thief and swore he'd choke with her money. But all I could understand was that she had gone to town, and when she came back she'd gone to the cupboard for something or other, and found the money and savings bank book had both gone. And it isn't difficult to take out the money entered in the book, either. She went for your father but he knew nothing. He only stood there, all white, with his mouth open, and not a word out of him."

"Who's been in this room?" "Nobody!" "But somebody must have been in!" "Nobody was, only Ilze came to talk to me." She always goes to see the old man when Busè's away. "It's Ilze, then," she raved, "Ilze! That devil!"

"But your father wouldn't have that. 'Think what you're saying!' he told her. 'I was here the whole time. How can you accuse your daughter-in-law of theft? She's a decent woman!' 'Then who was it, who?' she cried.

"Off she went to Ilze. Ilze thought and thought, at last she said she had an idea. It must be Petras.

"But Petras never comes in here!" "This time he must have done! Who else could it be?" And Ilze suddenly remembered she'd sent Petras to fetch Horstadolf, and she'd seen him coming out of the old people's room. She's even asked him what he was doing there. And directly after that he'd asked permission to go and see his mother. Said he was lonesome for her. And Ilze, suspecting nothing, had let him go! After all, she could always use Mikiukas Valaitis for his work.

"That's all rubbish about Petras," I told Buse. "Where'd he get the keys? You didn't hang them on his nose! Everything you've got is under seven locks and nine seals! And then you think that child could get at your things?"

"Aunt Snekutiene!" said Pikciurna, highly offended. "If my wife says so, then it is so. And let there be no doubt about it."

"Well, I've got plenty of doubts!" Aunt Snekutiene was quite ready to argue with her nephew. "And that's what I told your mother when she asked who it could be. 'Who?' I said, 'it's someone who knows all about picking locks. This is a matter for the gendarme. Why didn't you go there at once, instead of coming to me?' But she said: 'Pikciurna's gone for the gendarme.' 'Well,' I said, 'what more do you want?' 'Where's my money?' she said. 'Where shall I look?' And I said to her, I told her right out: 'Busè, my dear, when it's a matter of money you've always known how to find it! Why can't you guess now?' That's what I said to her! Jokub, I'll never forget as long as I live the way she squeezed me for everything she'd ever lent me, and with interest, too! What I say is, God sees all but doesn't reveal it at once. I don't mean that for you, Jokubas, you've never treated me wrong! But Busè, your mother, my sister. . ."

"Well, what happened after that?" said Pikciurna impatiently.

"She didn't say another word but went straight off home. And I didn't hear anything more about it. I only know the gendarme came. But where and what and how—nobody told me. It all happened last week. But the day before yesterday. . . . No, there is a God! Now just sit quiet, Jokubas, while I tell you. I went to see Valaitiene and it seemed she knew everything. And dear Lord above, the world must be coming to an end! It's the real end of the world, that it is!

"It happened this way. A dog found Petras. Everybody was looking for him and couldn't find him. And then a dog found him. Valaitis, your man, was busy in the yard, and suddenly he noticed the dog that always minds the sheep with Petras scratching and scratching at the cellar door, and barking, and whining, so Valaitis began to wonder—'What does he want? What's he looking for?' And the dog kept scratching and whining, and then he looked up at Valaitis, just like a human being it was, as though he were trying to say: 'Open the door, you'll see for yourself.' Well, Valaitis couldn't open the cellar door because it was locked. He went all

round it but he couldn't see anything queer. And then he suddenly remembered Petras. Maybe he's there? he thought. Maybe that's why the dog's getting all excited? So he asked the dog: 'Where's Petras?' And that dog looked straight at the door as though expecting him to come right out. So then Valaitis went to your mother and asked for the key.

"What key?" she asked, real cross she was. She was lying in bed, ill. She went straight to bed as soon as that money was stolen. 'What key?' she said. 'The key of the cellar.' 'Go to Ilze. Don't you know I haven't the keys any more?' And then she turned to the wall. So Valaitis went to Ilze. 'Give me the cellar key, Pikciurniene,' he said."

Pikciurna lost his temper.

"How dare he talk like that to my wife? Getting a bit above himself, is he?"

"I don't know anything about that! But Valaitis kept saying: 'Give me the cellar key!' And your wife said: 'No, I won't! How dare you come to me demanding keys! You'll answer for this, Valaitis!'"

"And quite right! That's the way to talk to him!" said Pikciurna approvingly. "Well, what next?"

"The next thing was that Valaitis turned round and went out, and shouted so the whole yard could hear: 'Give me an axe!'"

"Lenè told me Ilze was so frightened he was going to kill her, she crawled right under the bed. But I don't believe that, Jokubas. She's not that kind. But she was frightened all right, she was frightened."

"But it wasn't her Valaitis was thinking of. He broke in the door of the cellar. . . . Well, in a word, he found Petras. . . . He was unconscious, all beaten up, his hands tied—and so tightly they were not only swollen, they were blue. Valaitis and Lenè carried him out into the yard. But first they put something over his eyes so that the light wouldn't hurt them, and then they untied his hands. They had to cut the rope with a knife. And you could have cried to see the way that dog ran up to him and whined and licked his swollen hands. Nay, Jokubas, if you'd been at home there'd have been none of all this. And just think what's going to happen now! The noise brought everybody running. The maids were all crying, and the men grinding their teeth. Old Pikciurna, your father, came along, too. He was struck dumb when he saw it all, and real frightened. He swore that he knew nothing about it. And he really did know nothing. But Busè—she knew it all. But she came too. 'What's all this noise?' And Valaitis said to her, he said: 'Busè Pikciurniene, what have you done to this child?' 'I? What have I done? It's the gendarme, not me. . . . And why doesn't the brat confess? You! What have you done with my money? I nearly died!' 'High time you did croak,' said one of the labourers. 'Look at those hands of his, and then open your trap again if you dare, you devil's scum!'"

Young Pikciurna jumped to his feet, but the compartment was small so all he could do was stamp and clench his fists.

"I'll show them, damn them! This very evening I'll have everyone—"

But Snekutiene, in fine spirits, continued her tale.

"Busè looked at the boy's hands, and I don't know whether it was because of them, or because of the names they called her, but she got all excited and started screaming. How she screamed and called on Jesus! She's always calling on Jesus lately. And then suddenly—down she flopped on the ground and yelled: 'Water! Water! I'm dying!' But nobody even

moved. One of the men—I think it was the same one who spoke before—he just said: ‘No hope of that! It’ll take an axe to finish this one off! She ought to have her face smashed in!’ You know, Jokub, say what you like, I think that’s wrong. Busè’s an old woman now, one foot in the grave, you might say! What if she really had died there? What then? It could have given her heart failure, looking at a terrible thing like that.”

“Stop rambling! How did it end?” Pikciurna shouted so loudly that passengers came from the next compartment to take a look. “It’s all a conspiracy! Things like this in my house!”

“Wait a bit, you haven’t heard it all yet! Valaitis ordered the men to harness up the horses at once and take the child to the doctor. And the doctor said maybe both his hands will have to be cut off! What do you think of that? And the boy didn’t know anything at all about the money. It was quite true he’d been to see his mother. Ilze sent him herself. Then when he came back, she called him down there into the cellar. And after that the gendarme came and he—no, I can’t even tell you, it’s too terrible. They wanted to make the boy confess. And I’ve heard his mother’s been taken too and put in prison. Only nobody knows where, in Zemaitija or Klaipeda. So there you are, you see what happens when you’re not at home. But that’s not all, yet. As soon as they’d taken the child away, the labourers started a real riot. They just left Busè lying there on the grass—I say myself that was not right—and got together right there and discussed it all. Folks say they abused Busè something awful, until she managed to get up and run away home. But they abused Ilze, your wife, even worse. The things they called her! Folks say they called her all the worst names there are! They say she was as pale as a corpse and kept running from one window to the other and wringing her hands. And they kept shouting at her: ‘It’s you, you snake, that stole the money!’”